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COMIC SCENE

THE UK Comic Magazine

INSIDE LAUNCH ISSUE

The Last Word... Read Pat Mills exclusive monthly column
And featuring... 2000AD, Doctor Who, Roy of the Rovers, Dan Dare, The Beano, Deadline, Shiver & Shake, Valiant, Lion, Thunderbirds, Rok of the Reds, news & more

ComicScene UK Issue 0

August 2018

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COMIC SCENE
THE UK Comic Magazine

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Welcome to the launch issue

THE EDITOR SPEAKS

What encouraged this madness? Vinyl sales up again in 2017. That's what inspired this magazine.

50% research and 50% gut reaction that people wanted a comic about comics.

Whenever I bought a record it was about carrying that purchase home, taking it out of the sleeve for the first time, checking the needle was clean and wouldn't scratch the vinyl, reading the sleeve notes and lyrics while the LP was played again...and again...and again.

Then I'd go searching for the influences that helped inspire that record. There's plenty of choice for the artform - films, documentaries, books and magazines from Q to Mojo to Classic Pop and Rolling Stone.

But if you have an interest in comics, where do you go? Where is your voice?

There's none, really. Except on the internet. Blogs, vlogs, podcasts and websites. Hundreds of them. All of reasonable quality but slightly ironic, when you think about it. Why should one of the most progressive printed mediums - that spurns some of the most lucrative film, merchandise and gaming industries - find itself without it's own printed magazine in the UK? So you can find out more. Learn more. Debate more. Explore more of the rich tapestry of comic books that exist today and in years gone by?

Our gut reaction is you've had a gaping hole in your heart that you didn't even know you needed filling - so here it is. ComicScene UK. We hope you will come away from each issue wondering what on earth you did without it for all these years. We also hope you will feel inclusive. That you will contribute your thoughts on what you've read. That it will take us off on a tangent together and you will inform future content by being part of a two way conversation about what you would like to see covered and learn more about.

More importantly we hope you value us so much you'll continue to subscribe. And convince a friend to subscribe. Without that we are nothing. Working together we succeed. And if we get enough subscriptions we will invest in providing comic workshops for young people. Creating a spark in a future comic book writer or artist. Creating history together. Creating the next set of sleeve notes together. Creating that next vinyl record. To play again...and again...and again...

In the coming issues we hope you will welcome revisiting old friends, through classic reprints of long forgotton comics or reconsider some colourful characters you were perhaps too long in the tooth to appreciate. We want to help lift the veil on aspects of comicdom that you are too young to remember or too old to quite understand. We want to light the fire of uncurling that front cover as carefully as possible and reading a brand new story that will entertain you for many years to come - or encourage you to boot up that tablet and see if you get why people go on about that particular character, writer, artist or want to revisit that story over and over again. If you want a selfie as a Stormtrooper or skip off home with a sketch from your favourite artist this magazine will have something for you.

Is putting this together madness, particularly in an increasing 'digital' age? Yes, probably. When I started putting the magazine together I remember one of the first books I ever read. Around the World in 80 Days, by Jules Verne. I read it before I even read my first comic book. I've never read it since. But I've watched (some of) the movies. I've read (some of) the comic book adaptations. There is now even an addictive and interactive visual novel / game where you become part of the 19th century setting trying to get around the world in '80 days'. A new adventure, even if you don't succeed the first time around. I loved that (coverless, I recall) book. And I'd love for someone to guide me through what that book went on to influence, giving me a new perspective, a new point of view.

That's what ComicScene UK is for. I hope it doesn't sound like a mad mission. I hope we are around a little more than 80 days. I hope you will be part of the adventure.

Finally a big thank you to everyone who encouraged us on the way thus far. To those who thought it was a good idea and kept us going. To those who promoted what we were doing. To everyone who wrote for us. To everyone who subscribed so far in advance. And to everyone who is reading this now. We hope you enjoy it.

Kind regards,

Tony.

FEEDBACK

Got something to say on the content of the magazine.? We want to hear from you - our regular letters page starts next issue.

Email comicsceneuk@gmail.com

You can also give us your thoughts on twitter using the **#hashtag #comicscene** and **#tlw** for Pat Mills 'The Last Word'

We are always interested in what your current comic recommendations are - use the **#hashtag #comicscene** and we'll include them in future issues too.

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NUTS AND BOLTS

RAVINGS FROM INSIDE THE COMICS PUBLISHING INDUSTRY

How often do you see those outside the comics industry looking in declaring comics are dead, and our chosen medium is "on the ropes"? Too often, I suspect, but skimming various social media, you often find the detractors are focused entirely on the "Big Two" US publishers, DC and Marvel, and certainly near obsessive about American superhero comics.

Comics has always been a wider medium than men wearing pants outside their longjohns, and while the US comics industry might be staggering a little, and, of course, comics here in the UK no longer sell in their millions as they did in the 1950s and 60s, there's still plenty to be positive about.

Back in February, industry organisation ABC released the latest set of consumer magazine sales figures which, as usual, made for sobering reading for some. Key markets such as women's magazines, always considered an indicator of market health, for example, again took a sales hit. But despite some casualties - Doctor Who Adventures, for one - comics and children's magazine publishers remained bullish and upbeat about their titles, a sector where the news stand still sees a lot of launches. (Ben 10 and DC Superhero Girls, for two)

DC Thomson, publishers of Beano, had good reason to crow, the weekly humour title benefiting no doubt not only from the success of the Dennis and Gnasher TV show but also from careful nurturing of the brand online, where many younger comic readers are likely to find comics first, and at retail level, where, I'd argue, the publisher's resistance to "bagging" the comic with a free gift has paid off. The policy helps encourage content sampling that you simply can't do with so many comic / magazine titles in the sector - and I'm sure that's why titles like Egmont's TOXIC are paying the price, albeit also because they face competition from rival boys titles EPIC and MEGA.

(Egmont's new DC Superhero Girls recently launched unbagged, although later issues were wrapped in plastic; it'll be interesting to see its ABC figures next time around).

I don't want to be accused of viewing our comics news stand through rose-tinted glasses, because the ABC figures don't afford a full picture of market health. The cost of reporting means some publishers, don't bother filing figures. (They simply don't need to promote sales figures as they - don't rely on them to attract advertisers, a title's cover price covering editorial costs rather than ad revenue, which most consumer magazines are dependent on). This means we don't know how many copies of 2000AD sell each week and only Panini's Ultimate Spider-Man, hovering at the 25,000 average sale, affords any indication of how well Titan Comics and Panini's superhero licensed titles are doing.

But there's still enough to suggest comics on the UK news stand are far from "dead" - although they're a very different type of title to those older readers of ComicScene will remember with much fondness, with their cover to cover strips rather than, mainly, today's mix of cheaper to produce features and shorter strips. (2000AD, Beano, Commando and The Phoenix being exceptions to the norm).

Comics as a medium isn't dying, there's more variety and access to good comics than ever before. (I've not even touched on the thriving variety of the independent press here, either). Of course, that also means you have to wade through a lot of garbage, sometimes, to find the pearls.

The problem, as ever, is making money from the medium and it's good, I think, to see a number of publishers not taking the route of creating an IP simply in the hope that it will be optioned for film an TV and therefore recoup your investment cost.

DC Thomson's success with Beano, for me, both on the news stand and digital arena, has re-established the title among its core young audience, and as more than just the print comic. (Although I'm still mystified why they don't give Beano comic greater prominence on the official web site). That careful investment is now seeing an uplift in sales, helped by the success of its core characters on TV.

I'm seeing kids actively looking for the title over others in sales outlet, which is definitely a good thing. Comics publishers are employing various strategies to keep their titles alive, their brands in the public eye. There's still much more to do, and no-one is complacent about the challenges. But the game is far from over.

And far from dying.

Marvel Superheroes storm Madame Tussauds Blackpool

Madame Tussauds Blackpool launched its epic new Marvel Superheroes addition at a VIP-filled launch at the end of March.

The million pound Marvel exhibit – currently starring Nick Fury, Groot, Hulk, Spider-Man and Thor – is an integral part of the whole attraction in the Lancashire resort, not and "added extra".

On hand to promote this latest addition to Madame Tussauds were Love Island contestants Amber Davies and Scott Thomas, along with Coronation Street star Samia Longchambon, an unusual mix of soap and reality stars which successfully caught the attention of the national press and local press and helped the new exhibition grab some headlines.

The previously undeveloped space adds 5501 square feet to the existing public footprint within the attraction that already includes a host of film, TV and variety stars, from Benny Hill and Ken Dodd to the Queen and Lady Gaga. From the Rovers Return of Coronation Street (where you can sit with Deidre or pretend to be chatting to Street veteran Ken) to a Best of British section, there's plenty to see, and the new Marvel Superheoes exhibit simply adds even more fun to a visit.

The "waxworks" offer plenty of interactive opportunities for kids of all ages to enjoy. Incorporating four distinct zones, the new Marvel area includes a number of new figures as well as interactive experiences to truly excite and delight visitors.

The attraction takes inspiration from the original comics as well as the blockbuster films that continue be a huge hit at the box office and it really does offer Marvel fans the chance to get up close and personal to their favourite characters from the big screen.

Talking to the team behind this new exhibit, we're told there are plans to add new characters and they also hope to run some comic-inspired events during the year, too.

- Marvel Super Heroes is part of the main Madame Tussauds Blackpool attraction and is included in the ticket price, starting from £13.50 for children and £16.50 for adults (additional 20% discount available when tickets are booked online).
  For more information or book your ticket today visit: www.madametussauds.com/blackpool/en

Author: John Freeman
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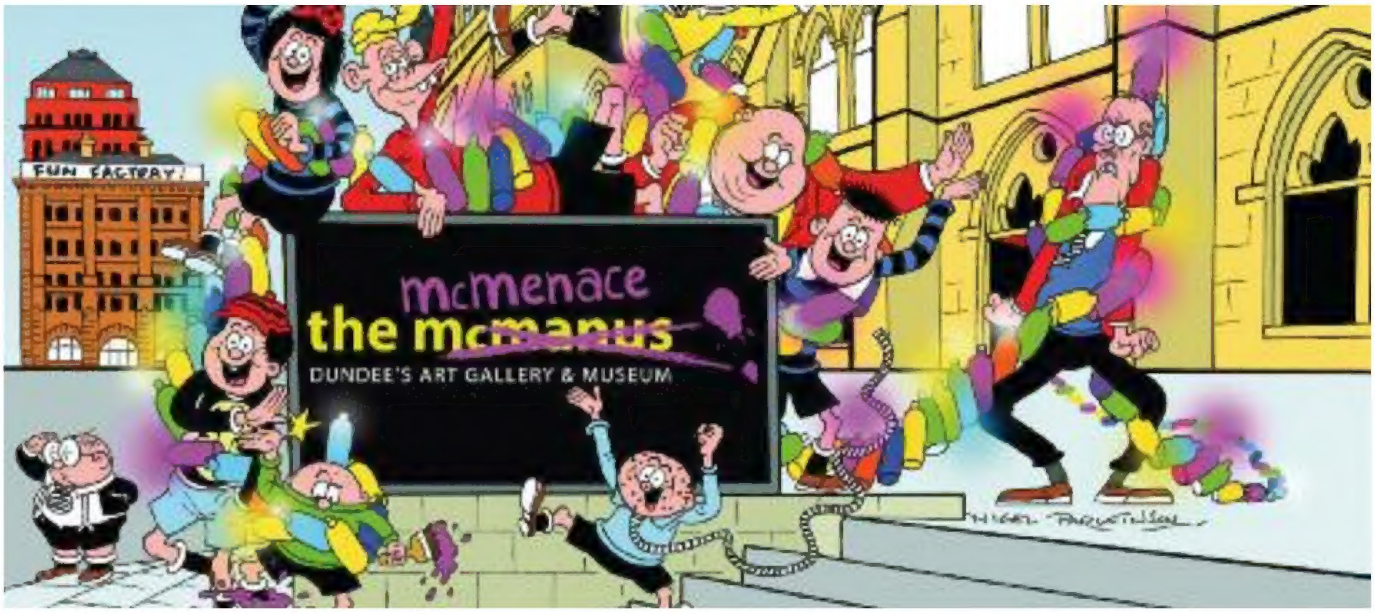
John is currently editing Doctor Who



Comic Scene Issue One News

Beano's 80th Anniversary Plans Shape Up

There will celebrations aplenty in July when the Beano marks 80 years of publication, with plenty of events planned and a lot of tie-in merchandise in the works, announced last year.

One major tie in is a bespoke exhibition dedicated to the beloved Beano characters and comic, which will be hosted by The McManus, Dundee's art gallery and museum.

In Beano's 80th year, the special collaboration will see The McManus revise their name to 'The McMenace', for the duration of the exhibit from the 2nd June – 21st October 2018.

To commemorate the collaboration, Beano comic illustrator Nigel Parkinson has created an original comic strip, which sees The Bash Street Kids larking about and designing the new sign for The McMenace. The illustration shows The Bash Street Kids tangled in the 'Waldella, Dundee' by artist David Batchelor, one of the museum's most popular exhibits.

The unique exhibition will have a large focus on The Bash Street Kids, whose conception was inspired by pupils from Dundee High School, just a stone's throw from DC Thomson Media's Headquarters at Meadowside in the city.

The showcase will explore the birth of the Beano comic and its development throughout the decades, looking at some of its best loved characters including: Dennis and Gnasher, Rodger the Dodger, Minnie the Minx and, of course, The Bash Street Kids.

Representation of the golden age of comics can be seen in the form of The Dandy and The Hotspur, which entertained the nation's children on a weekly basis by writers and artists from DC Thomson Media.

"We think that the Beano's 80th is an outstanding achievement, its influence shows the test of time as it is still so incredibly popular with children today, says Sinclair Aitken, Chair of Leisure & Culture Dundee. "We can't wait to celebrate the birthday of this comic in its hometown. They have created so many iconic characters through the years from Dennis and Gnasher, Minnie the Minx to the fantastic Bash Street Kids.

"This exhibition is a very special collaboration between ourselves and Beano Studios and we look forward to welcoming visitors of all generations from near and far, when the exhibit opens in early June."

"Dundee is the hometown of The Dandy and Beano, and so for us, there is no better partner than The McManus to celebrate our 80th milestone with," says Mike Stirling, Head of Beano Studios Scotland.

"The exhibit will offer fans a glimpse into the history of the comics, and showcase the rebellious and fun characters of the comics throughout the ages and display how they still connect with children today."

- The free exhibition opens at The McManus: Dundee's Art Gallery & Museum on 2nd June 2018 and runs until Sunday 21 October 2018 Web: www.mcmanus.co.uk

London's Cartoon Museum is On the Move!

London's Cartoon Museum has announced it has secured a new, permanent home in the centre of the capital.

The new Cartoon Museum will be based on Wells Street, just north of Oxford Street in NOHO, ten minutes walk from the current location, and near Oxford Street and Tottenham Court Road tube stations.

The plans were revealed to the public at the opening of 50 Glorious Years! in March for the first time, and the Museum team are keen to hear supporters and visitors ideas and suggestions for developing the new venue.

The space is a blank canvas, measuring 4,200 square feet, about the same size as the current museum, and in the large basement of a new building developed by Great Portland Estates. It has a separate street level entrance, and is serviced by a lift and stairs, and has decent height ceilings.

The Museum has signed up for a 25 year lease, at a peppercorn rent - which is a major boon for the Museum whose current building costs have often proved a major focus for fund raising.

"Wells Street is in a very vibrant area near the cross section with Mortimer Street, populated by young professionals and students from Westminster University," notes Cartoon Museum chairman and cartoonist Oliver Preston. "It's close to the BBC in an area that used to be home to the rag trade.

"Since inception we have thrived as a metropolitan museum, attracting visitors from all over the world, but we do have especially strong local support from volunteers, Museum Friends and visitors in London – and, of course, tourists."

The Museum's Board of Trustees have chosen a young up and coming architect to design the new space, in a style they feel will convey the excitement and vision of the whole team behind the project.

This is very exciting news and a great new development for a popular Museum devoted to cartoons and comics, which will open in 2019.

In the meantime, do get along to the Museum's current location and check out 50 Glorious Shows! which celebrates what the Cartoon Museum has achieved in its first twelve years.

The exhibition features items from, or relating to, all the previous exhibitions and also showcases many of the wonderful artworks which the museum has acquired since 2006.

Celebrating the world of British cartoons and comics in its many forms, the exhibition features works by past masters of the British tradition of cartooning such as Hogarth, Gillray, Tenniel, Heath Robinson, Pont, H .M. Bateman, E. H. Shepard and Ronald Searle. Top comic artists and graphic novelists such as Dudley D. Watkins, John McCrea and Garth Ennis, Hunt Emerson, David Lloyd, Posy Simmonds and Bryan Talbot have featured in several exhibitions, and are now part of the collection. For those who love a laugh there are treats by Sally Artz, Larry, Frank Dickens, Mike Williams, Michael Heath, Kipper Williams, Peattie and Taylor, and many great joke cartoonists both past and present.

Britain has a great tradition of political satire, and the show will include selections from our Spitting Image, €urobollocks! Bell Èpoque, Maggie! Maggie! Maggie!, Punch, Private Eye and Steadman@77 exhibitions, as well as some recent donations by the rising generation of political cartoonists.

At the heart of political and social satire is great caricature, and the exhibition includes brilliant exponents of the art such as Max Beerbohm, Mark Boxer, Robert Sherriffs and Trog.

Other exhibitions have looked at how cartoons and comics have reflected social, cultural and political changes, including two world wars, the changing face of marriage, the reign of Queen Elizabeth II and our relationship with the demon drink. One of the most vibrant areas of cartooning and comics is the world of graphic novels, which is represented by a selection of work produced by British graphic novelists over the last twenty-five years.

- 50 Glorious Shows! runs from 28th March until 2nd September 2018 at the Cartoon Museum, 35 Little Russell Street, London, WC1A 2HH, Tel: 0207 580 8155 www.cartoonmuseum.org Facebook & Twitter

Convention Corner

A quick guide to upcoming comics oriented events in the UK & Ireland

June

Cardiff Independent Comic Expo:
2nd June 2018
ciceevents.wordpress.com

Glenrothes Comic Con:
9th June 2018
www.facebook.com/glenrothescomiccon

Moniaive Festival:
10th -11th June 2017
www.moniaivefestivalvillage.org.uk

East London Comic Art Festival (ELCAF):
22nd - 24th June 2018
www.elcaf.co.uk

MACC-POW! (Macclesfield):
23rd June 2018
www.maccpow.co.uk

Glasgow Comic Con:
30th June 2018
www.glasgowcomiccon.com

July

MCM Comic Con Manchester Central:
28th – 29th July 2018
www.mcmcomiccon.com/manchester

London Film and Comic Con 2018:
27th – 29th July
www.londonfilmandcomiccon.com

October

Lakes International Comics Art Festival:
12th - 14th October 2018
www.comicartfestival.com

Little Heroes Comics

Little Heroes Comics is a UK based charity that creates and distributes comic making kits to children through hospitals and healthcare organisations across the UK.

The charity started in March 2017 when its founder Aaron Rackley wanted to give back to the hospital that helped him during his own time battling cancer in late 2013. He set up a JustGiving account and set a target of £1000 with a plan to create 100 comic making kits.

The support and the feedback from not just the medical field but also the comic book community was so great that Aaron decided to form the charity officially and set out to find funding to create more.

Little Heroes has been alive for over a year now and has so far raised over £10,000 which has enabled them to send over 700 kits out. Fundraising for Little Heroes is a combination of generous donations form individuals and grants from the government, however Little Heroes has just released its own Anthology. The First Anthology 'Strength' is a selection of stories all based around the title's theme. The pages are filled with stories from various creators who have donated their work for free to enable the Anthology to come to life. It was recently successfully funded via Kickstarter and is now available to purchase from the Little Heroes online store.

Little Heroes is now working on their second Anthology and continuing to send out comic making kits to children.

If you would like to help support Little Heroes and the work they do, you can find them at the following urls.

www.littleheroescomics.co.uk
www.littleheroes.bigcartel.com
www.twitter.com/littleheroeskit
www.facebook.com/littleheroescomics

SINCE Dan Dare burst onto the scene in Eagle magazine issue 1 (dated 14th April 1950) many artists have illustrated him and his stories, what I just want to present here is a whistle-stop guide to those many artists and what their interpretation of Dare looked like.

1). FRANK HAMPSON

It's hard to know where to start with Frank Hampson and his contribution to Dan Dare, or to pick a single defining image. The version of Dare, the colonel in the Interplanet Space Fleet, that people are familiar was not Hampson's initial idea. Originally he'd envisaged a tough street-fighting man of the cloth in the East end of London, this idea then evolved into Chaplain Dan Dare of the Inter-planet Patrol, before eventually becoming the heroic figure we recognise today. In his introduction to 'Dan Dare's spacebook' (1953) Hampson recalled that it was while serving in WW2 in Antwerp in 1944 that he witnessed the birth of space travel by seeing the rockets used by the Nazis in their desperate attempts to prevent the Allied advance. Dan was the man Hampson always wanted to be, Digby the man he felt he was. The RAF in space, a world ruled by a single government, races working together in the defence of Earth, a boundless optimism for the future and a solar system teeming with alien life – the worlds that Hampson envisaged feel further away today than ever before.

What we have to remember him, and his ideals, by is one of the most beautiful, most detailed comic strips ever created in this country. These are the reasons that Dan Dare endures, thanks Frank.

The Many Faces of DAN DARE

by Richard Sheaf

2). HAROLD JOHNS & GRETA TOMLINSON

Marooned on Mercury was the 3rd Dan Dare adventure (running from mid-1952 to early 1953) and, while the opening episodes were drawn by Frank Hampson, the artistic duties were quickly handed over to Harold Johns & Greta Tomlinson. Mercury was their most significant contribution to the Dare saga – with Greta even going so far as to design the 'sing-song' language that the Mercurians use. The artistic style is distinctive, with art that is thicker and darker than a Frank Hampson page but with a colour palette that can be particularly lurid (even within the same frame!). The story follows Dan and the gang as they find themselves on Mercury where they, and the indigenous inhabitants, battle against the mighty Mekon. (above, a rare example of a page signed by Harold Johns)

3). DESMOND WALDUCK

Desmond Walduck was the artist predominantly responsible for the 5th Dan Dare adventure Prisoners of Space (which ran for nearly a year in Eagle, 28/05/54-06/05/55). This was Walduck's largest contribution to the Dare canon and is based around a game of cat and mouse between Dan and the Mekon on a space station. The limited environment (running around on a space station is quite different from the previous stories where there's been a whole new planet to explore), the use of child characters Steve Valiant and 'Flamer' Spry and Walduck's rather 'stiff' art mean that Prisoners is not a particularly well regarded story. Of course, plenty of artists fail to live up to the amazing dynamism of Frank Hampson's art but Walduck pales in comparison to the Dare artists that preceded, and succeeded, him.

4). FRANK BELLAMY

When Hampson was removed from the Dare strip in late 1959 Frank Bellamy was parachuted in to draw it – he shared art duties with Don Harley with a typical issue of Eagle having one Bellamy page and one Harley page. Their very different art styles jar and it's a big step away from the continuity that the strip had previously gloried in. Bellamy joined the story partway through Terra Nova and then worked on Trip to Trouble and Project Nimbus stories but from the outset he was reluctant to take the strip on and, in the end, only agreed to work on it for a year. His year spanned August 1959-July 1960; he then moved on to illustrate the Fraser of Africa, Montgomery of Alamein and Heros the Spartan in Eagle.

Bellamy's Dare is older, more grizzled and definitely has a furrowed brow at all times. The contrast with Don Harley's youthful, botox-using Dare (often on the very next page) could not be greater.

5). DON HARLEY & BRUCE CORNWELL

Don had worked with Frank Hampson on the strip's highwater mark (the Man from Nowhere trilogy and Safari Space / Terra Nova). After sharing art duties with Frank Bellamy in Bellamy's year on the strip, Don worked with Bruce Cornwell on a run of 4 stories (Mission of the Earthman, The Solid Space Mystery, The Platinum Planet, The Earth Stealers) over a couple of years from mid-1960 to early 1962. Cornwell handles the technical side of the strip while Harley provided

his trademark plain and simple version of Dare – this is not to underplay Harley's role in Dare, he just has a distinctive style. Hampson acknowledged Harley as the second best Dare artist. Harley continues to produce Dare work for Spaceship Away magazine http://spaceshipaway.org.

6). KEITH WATSON

Keith Watson holds a special place in Dan Dare fans hearts for many reasons. Firstly, he was a Dan Dare fan who got to live every fan's dream and work on the strip itself and secondly, he almost single-handedly wrestled the strip back onto the front cover of Eagle in the 1960s when he produced some truly astonishing covers. He also worked on the Dare revamps for new Eagle and, latterly, for Spaceship Away magazine – his early death robbed British comics of a unique talent. Watson's distinctive thick black lines combined with a use of colour that would be impressive for any artists is rendered doubly so when you realise that Keith Watson was colour blind. He illustrated the strip single-handed for 5 years, from 1962-7.

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How Comic Books help us to relive our Childhood

By Benoit Peeters
Writer, novelist, & comics studies scholar

Traditionally, comic books have been aimed primarily at children – to such a degree that they are often identified with them. Regardless of the recent evolution of the genre, particularly given the growing popularity of more adult graphic novels, to me the link between comics and childhood continues to be very profound.

There are certain regressive aspects to our love of comics and "bandes dessinées" (or BD) – as they are known in French, my native language. For example, collectors often pay incredible prices for figurines and old editions. They also have a remarkable desire to keep alive mythical characters after the death of their creator: from Batman and Astroboy to Spirou and Blake and Mortimer, characters continue to be resuscitated, with varying degrees of success. It's as if the readers who were comforted in their childhood by these heroes can't bear to see them disappear.

This seems to be something particular to the medium of the comic book. Of course, we remember the novels that we loved during our childhood, but we don't read and return to them as often as our favourite comics.

A thirst for innocence

It's also possible to admire great works of literature, philosophy and art without the need to return to them compulsively or to spend thousands on first editions. But there is a kind of archaic drive behind our relationship with comics, an inconsolable nostalgia mixed with an irresistible desire to not completely grow up. We dismiss this phenomenon by talking about childishness. But it's more about a thirst for innocence or permanence that we keep carrying around inside us, and which comics allow us to satisfy easily.

But of course, this direct link with childhood is only one aspect of graphic fiction. Comics have also been evolving.

In many modern comics since the 1970s, for example, the heroes are no longer invincible – they are affected by age or their own fragility. Comic book characters increasingly are caught in linear time, which affects and transforms them, just like it does every one of us. Links with others are made and remade, injuries cause real suffering, people, including the heroes themselves, die. They have abandoned the mythic to enter the romantic.

This new relationship with time is at the heart of many celebrated graphic novels, particularly the two volumes of the Pulitzer prize-winning Maus, which reimagines the Holocaust, casting mice as the Jews and cats as the Nazis. But Art Spiegelman's masterpiece doesn't just deal with the Holocaust and its survivors. It is concerned with a lot of other issues: the relationship between fa-

ther and son, the difficulties of communication and of forgiveness. With the death of Vladek, the narrator's father, in the middle of the story, memory changes function and gives a new sense to the work: mourning and history are inseparable.

In another way, Japanese manga such as My Father's Journal or A Distant Neighborhood by Jirô Taniguchi pose similar questions. So too do the extraordinary biographical works accomplished by Emmanuel Guibert in The Photographer and Alan's War. Mixing personal and universal elements, those stories are subtle and complex as the best novels.

A particularly striking example is proposed by Lint, one of the recent books produced by Chris Ware which describes the life of an ordinary man, from his birth to his last breath in 70 pages. The graphic and narrative style is codified to the extreme, far removed from any apparent realism. Ware's designs are on the edge of a diagrammatic style. And yet, when we read this book – in which each of the years of Lint's life is reduced to a single page – we are plunged into a story that deeply moves us.

This book moves us, not just because we identify with a character, as we might when watching a film, but because we identify with the medium itself. The pages of Chris Ware's book evoke a mixture of emotions, primitive and childlike and sophisticated and adult at the same time, that appeal to a whole spectrum of experiences.

This highly sophisticated graphic novel can help us to understand how comic book art is connected with childhood, even in its most subtle and modern evolutions.

Drawing donkeys

The simplicity of comic books is another key feature. Around 1840, Rodolphe Töpffer, inventor and first theorist of the comic book, had already started questioning the manner in which a child recognises a donkey illustrated in a linear drawing. When a donkey is represented in a picture in the middle of the countryside accompanied by a play of light and shadow, a young child can't always immediately identify it. But if the donkey is suggested only by a few lines, the child doesn't hesitate to recognise it. Even if a tree trunk is placed in front of the donkey in this simple linear drawing, so that only a few fragments of it are left, the child still sees it for what it is.

This tells us something about the specific way we perceive caricatures, such as those in comic books. When it's a light touch design, a caricature fixes an image in our minds which cannot be erased, as if it has unveiled somebody's true character. Through this we can see another essential quality of the comic book: its ability to stick in our memory.

In the midst of the flux of images and art surrounding us, comic books have a special and unforgettable place. They have a remarkable capacity to prolong the life of images well beyond the time of reading. The most remarkable sequences of images continue to live with us, accompanying us for years.

In this regard, the nearest thing to the comic book is perhaps the song. I don't think there is any song that we fall in love with immediately: we have to listen to it again and again – sometimes obsessively – until it has infiltrated us and accompanies us in our daily life. To me, comics are similar to this: they live where we dream to live. There is something unique and profound here, comic books are a privileged way of renewing the buried emotions of our childhood.

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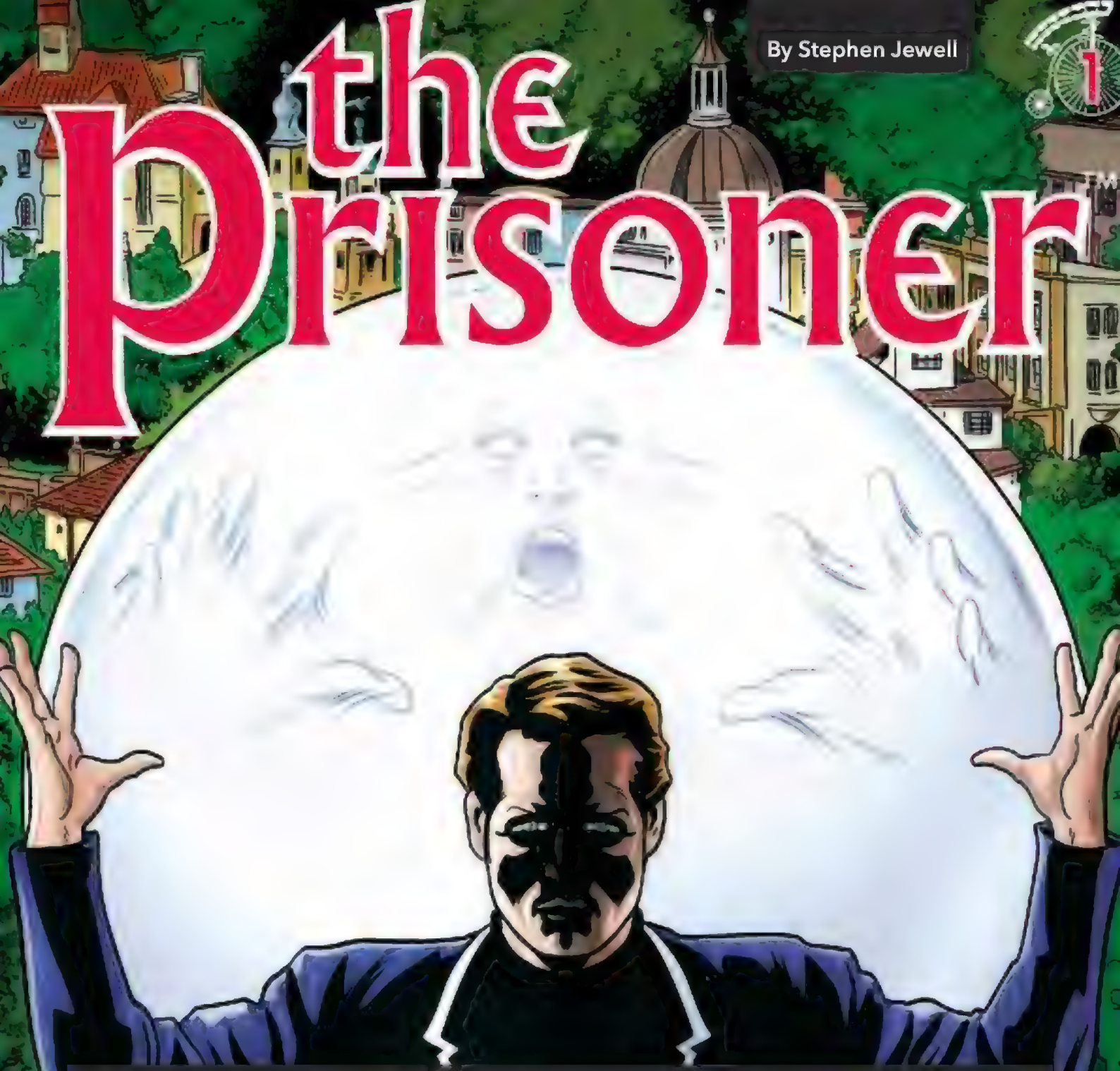
the Prisoner

By Stephen Jewell



Renowned for its notoriously ambiguous ending, The Prisoner is one of the most popular cult science fiction television shows ever despite only running for a meagre seventeen episodes from September 1967 to February 1968. Now just in time for its fiftieth anniversary, the ITC Entertainment series - which starred Patrick McGoohan as the incarcerated Number Six and Leo McKern as his captor, Number Two - is set to enjoy a renewed lease of life in a new Titan Comics mini-series.

"I really liked a lot of it," recalls writer Peter Milligan, who is teaming up with Canadian artist Colin Lorimer (Image's The Hunt, Harvest) on the four-parter. "Firstly, I liked how bloody different it was from anything else I'd seen. I enjoyed the surreal quality and this sense that somewhere beyond this Kafkaesque tale of identity and mindfuck, there was another story - a spy story – that had somehow been hijacked by this more surreal one. I wanted to explore some of that in my own take on The Prisoner. The idea of a certain kind of tale, a kind of genre, that's knocked off course."

"I've always loved the show," adds Lorimer. "For me, it has to be that really iconic title sequence, it's wonderfully shot and so succinct in its storytelling and set-up. Also, Rover the killer balloon certainly left a lasting impression!"

Fresh off Titan's recent Dan Dare revival, Milligan was paired with Lorimer on The Prisoner by Titan editor David Leach, who evidently made the seasoned scribe

an offer he couldn't refuse. "We discussed it over lunch and things progressed from there," says Milligan, who was tempted by the propitious timing of the project. "We'll have to see if bringing it out now turns out to be auspicious. But I hope it is, as it certainly lends the whole thing a pleasing frisson."

Known for his mind-bending work on series such as Vertigo '90s trailblazer Shade the Changing Man and the more recent Kid Lobotomy for former Vertigo editor Shelly Bond's new IDW imprint Black Crown, The Prisoner appears to share many of Milligan's favourite themes. "That's one of the things that appealed to me," says Milligan. "Clearly, the people who created The Prisoner had been exposed to Franz Kafka, and I'm a huge fan of the existential Czech."

While the conflict between Number Six and Number Two is still at the heart of the story, Milligan reveals that there will be a brand new Prisoner in the proverbial hot seat. "While we are in no way trying to retell an old classic that existed in the context of its own time, I want there to be feeling that we are in the same world as the original show," he explains. "But it's about more than just the relationship between Number Six and Number Two, as this story is really about the relationship between Number Six and the world, which for a while might be represented by The Village. However, there's still very much a power dynamic between the different numbers and we'll see that in this story."

Titled 'The Uncertainty Machine,' the latest Prisoner is a British agent called Breen - who for reasons that will eventually become clear - finds himself trapped in The Village. "In our world of doubt and scepticism, how do we know what is true and what is false?" questions Milligan. "And are there even such things as true and false anymore? Our hero seems to personify this uncertainty as he is drawn into the strange world and machinations of The Village."

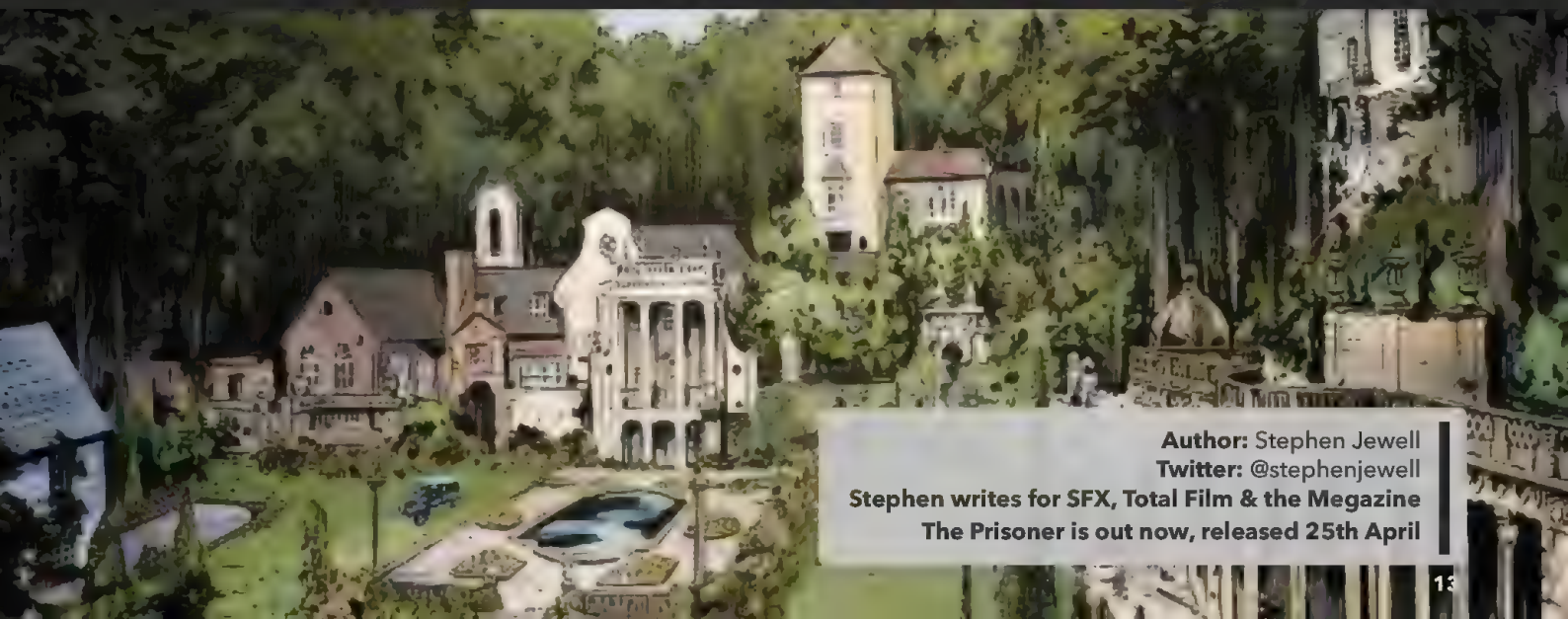
Famously filmed in the North Wales village of Portmerion, The Village itself was very much like a character itself in the television series, an intriguing aspect of the original story that Milligan intends to emulate. "The Village plays a central role in this story," he teases. "Not just the Village as a place but also as an idea, a kind of movement."

Having admitted that part of the appeal of The Prisoner was "the opportunity to draw those blazers," Lorimer has closely studied not just its distinctive clobber but also its striking architecture and other memorable visual elements. "The television series has been on a constant loop while I've been working, and it's the main influence to my approach," he says. "Of course, as this comic book series is set in the modern day, the clothing reflects that. But once we're in the Village, we're keeping it pretty close to the fashion of the sixties, as I think we all want to give the fans of the show something recognizable. And Joana Lafuente's colour approach also helps add an old school aesthetic to the surroundings."

While it featured on the cover of City Magazines weekly TV Tornado within weeks of its original transmission, The Prisoner was scheduled to make its comic book debut two years later in a Marvel mini-series in 1969. Written by Steve Englehart and originally drawn by Gil Kane before Jack Kirby assumed penciling reins, the first issue was an adaptation of opening episode 'Arrival.' But although Kirby completed work on the first issue and Mike Royer inked and lettered around six pages, it never saw the light of day, At least that was the case until this July when Titan will publish a special hardcover volume, The Prisoner: Original Art Edition.

With Marvel eventually losing the comics rights, it would be another two decades before The Prisoner finally hit the comic shelves with the release of Dean Motter and Mark Askwith's four-issue, prestige format DC mini-series, The Prisoner: Shattered Visage in 1988. But while Milligan and Lorimer admit to being "familiar" with the work that Englehart, Kane and Kirby did, they both maintain that they haven't taken any particular leads from any of The Prisoner's past comic book incarnations. "I remember checking out Shattered Visage many years ago, and I loved the graphic novel cover with the bike on the beach," recalls Lorimer. "But I can't say that I've been influenced by any of the previous comics, as my influence has solely come from the television programme."

With Lorimer declaring "if Peter was to keep writing, I'd certainly keep drawing," hopefully it won't be another twenty years before The Prisoner once again graces a comic book page. "There's definitely scope for a sequel," says Milligan. "But we'll have to see how things develop…"



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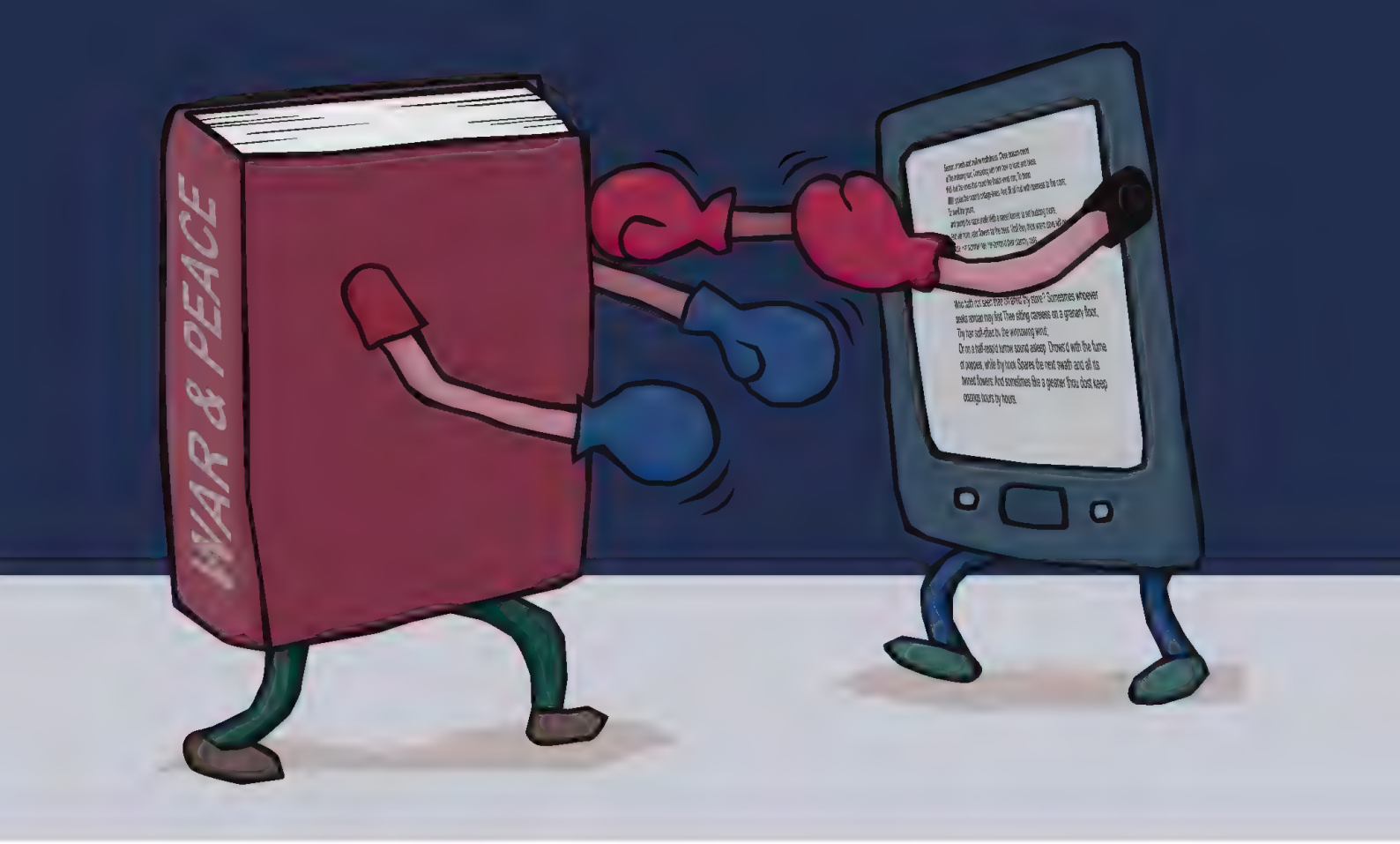
The Prisoner is out now, released 25th April



I'm in a well paid job, not raking it in, but comfortable. A lot (some would say disproportionate but they are crazy) of my money goes on comics and magazines. I hoard everything (except my Private Eyes oddly), and still have a stack of computer magazines from the 1980s (Zzap 64s if you must know). I clearly have a very tolerant wife.

'Course, with the wonders of modern technology we're spared all that agony of storage and unsightly stacks of periodicals, paper cuts and inky fingers. We now have "iPads", tablets, high definition wide screen monitors, laptops screens, and mobile 'phones (if you squint hard enough or use the zoom function) to consume our reading material. We're well into the digital age, my entire comic collection (complete runs of 2000AD, Judge Dredd the Megazine and associated titled, plus a few thousand assorted British newsstand (remember them?) and American comics) could fit on my laptop. Or, why restrict to local digital storage. Were I to be extra clever, they could be kept remotely in the "cloud". Convenient or what?

> **"I'm in my mid 40s and I don't adapt well. Willingly nor easily."**

The thing is; I'm in my mid 40s and I don't adapt well. Willingly nor easily.

We've all read some digital publications. I belong to far too many Facebook groups, and I can see that many of the members subscribe to digital comics and magazines. I've read and heard people extolling the virtues of digital publishing – how many magazines, books and comics you can store, easily downloadable or readable online (assuming you have a connection). You can store thousands of publications on a tiny piece of hardware.

But isn't having the object in your hand, the actual publication be it book, magazine or comic, that admittedly was probably once a grand spruce, pine, or birch (other trees are available) part of the attraction? The medium isn't as important as the content, but for me it certainly adds to the value.

I consider myself a luddite. A reasonably modern luddite. I'm not that committed really, a bit half arsed. But I don't see a need for further progression. Technology for me stops at around 2004, hardly back to 8 track cartridge or the gramophone, but the cloud leaves me cold. What's the point of having something that is so ethereal? Something that you can't touch?

I'm a big fan of music. I will listen to MP3s, but basically, I would prefer not to. I'd much prefer to have the CD or vinyl, even tape. I spend some of my time hoarding old cassette players to make sure I still have the means to play my collection of Luke curated C90 compilations.

Comics and magazines are the same. My routine at 13 was to get up on a Saturday, wait for the paper to arrive, with my shot of thrills slipped inside the daily black and white (I am old) misery report. There was a period when I used to walk a 5 mile round trip to get my weekly fix. These days, my magazines and comics arrive through the letter box

OK COMPUTER

DEAD TREE VS. BINARY

DIGITAL VS. PRINT

(I still visit my local comic shop to get my American stuff), hopping out of bed (careful to wear dressing gown not to scare the kids), back to bed with coffee, and wifey snoring peacefully next to me; and importantly: not disturbing me (love you darling).

'Course it also means that I'm like a Klegg with toothache when I don't get it.

This isn't meant to be a balanced argument weighing up the pros and cons of print over digital. I'll be clear, I am completely in favour of the continued sacrifice of thousands of our arboreal friends to satisfy my reading demands (though obviously recycling is the way to go). To me deforestation is a fair price to pay for not having to rely on a hunk of plastic, metal and glass, probably assembled by a malnourished 14 year old Chinese girl, pulling 27 hour shifts, paid in rat droppings and who has already lost a few body parts to the production process.

I prefer my reading matter in a form that I can touch, smell, fold, carry without needing an electricity supply (although I will admit some form of lighting is necessary occasionally), which unfortunately somewhere along the line has meant the processing of vast swathes of forestry and counting the days for your kids to move out so you can turn their bedrooms into homes for your ever growing perilous pillars of periodicals.

Yes, okay, I have all my comics in the attic, their weight causing structural damage to my house. In a corner of the marital boudoir are my motorcycle magazines, copies of Retro Gamer under the bed with music magazines and recent comics.

Yes, they are probably a fire hazard. A potential conflagration on a grand scale, the flames would light up the town, confuse low flying aircraft and the devastation would lower property values.

Granted, they take up quite a bit of space, but isn't that part of the fun? Where is the fun in taking a tablet around with you? Where are the stacks of comics and old magazines at the bottom of the wardrobe? Why do you need batteries or a power supply to read? (Lighting is given). What about the hours, nay, days, of sorting them, losing yourself in back issues that you forgot about? It's a chore, but it's not really. Can you do that with an iPad? Hell no.

I don't think you can savour a digital publication in the same way. I treat material that exists purely as 0s and 1s differently from physical product. Best example outside of reading matter is music. Unless I have the physical CD / Vinyl or whatever, I won't play or use it as often as I would if I did. Comic wise, Brian K Vaughan and Marcos Martin created a really cool web comic a few years ago called Private Eye. I began following it, but lost track and in the end I waited for the physical collection. It's a lovely package that looks great on the shelf, gathering dust along with the other books I may never read again. It's the medium, the print, paper, staples / glue, the smell (which is a tad weird I know) and the feel that for me contributes to the value, it's the medium and the content.

I don't want an e-mail notifying me that my comic or magazine is ready to be downloaded. I want mine dropping though my letter box, wrapped in a plastic bag in quarantine, segregated from the thrill sucking bills and junk mail, ready to be unleashed, or walking into a shop to pick my titles. Such a heady thrill

I flick through a comics news websites, scanning for specific articles. I read stuff, but I don't really absorb. They are handy for bits of gossip, but for a proper article, you can't beat dead tree journalism. I've read digital magazines (which to me sounds like an oxymoron). I still rue the day that I threw out all my Comics International and Comic World (I had to sacrifice something when I moved into my now wife and step kid's home – and it wasn't going to be the comics). They are like a snap shot, a paper time capsule of the news and events that were occurring in the world of comics. All the articles from the nineties about the unbridled (and short lived) expansion at Marvel UK, Kevin Eastman & Tundra throwing money around like there was no tomorrow, the interviews with creators, the rise of Image and the reviews of long forgotten titles and runs. I can't imagine you'd get that kind of history with an ephemeral digital edition. This is why I'm looking forward to the publication of ComicScene UK, it's another opportunity to have a print magazine that discusses comics and has creator interviews, that has that permanency, and that acts as a record for a period of time in comics history.

I know that I am probably in a minority, and I'm going to go the way of Old One Eye and all the other dinosaurs, but for as long as I am about, I want inky fingers when I read, not a smudged tablet screen.

ComicScene UK is also available digitally at www.issuu.com/comicsflix

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21st CENTURY FLASHBACK

Thunderbirds – 'Talons of the Eagle'

The idea of Thunderbirds' adventures in the TV21 comic being in continuity with the television series is something that continues to delight, enrage and befuddle fans since their respective debuts over half a century ago. Issues of story-placement aside, it's impossible to deny one aspect that surely made TV21 such a popular read – its insatiable attitude to develop themes and ideas found in the television shows of Century 21. The Stingray strip gave great focus to Aquatraz, the underwater prison often mentioned but never seen in the TV show. Likewise, Captain Scarlet's ongoing strip grew the Mysterons' mythology by introducing the Mysteron Controller. In the case of **'Talons of the Eagle'**, writer Alan Fennell put the daring rescues that defines Thunderbirds to one side and placed his focus on expanding the espionage personality of International Rescue.

During May 1966, Thunderbirds had only recently blasted off in the pages of TV21, with 'Talons of the Eagle' being its third outing (published in seven instalments between the 23rd of April and the 4th of June), and yet it's clear there's a desire to evolve beyond standard rescue motifs. 'Talons of the Eagle' is built around asking the question of what would happen if International Rescue were in danger of having their secrets exposed. The Imposter toyed with that question, but 'Talons of the Eagle' takes the opportunity to paint a darker picture of International Rescue, that supposedly pacifist outfit. Picking up from the previous strip's rescue mission, Jungle Adventure, Thunderbirds 1 and 2 are set to dock at Tracy Island after a job well done, until the United States Air Force craft, the Eagle, blasts through the skies and proceeds to hunt down Thunderbird 2. One of Frank Bellamy's most wondrous mecha visualisations, its appearance out of nowhere, undetected by I.R.'s technology, forces the Tracy family to conjure up a life-threatening plan to disable the Eagle's sophisticated jamming equipment in order to maintain their secrecy.

The strip's grim, hardnosed theme stands at odds with the otherwise optimistic nature found in the TV show, but 'Talons of the Eagle' is a muscular, confident affair. The first act sees Thunderbird 2 forced into floating in outer space to avoid detection from the Eagle, providing the strip with the handsome ability to showcase all five Thunderbird craft in action. Despite TV21's action-orientated nature, 'Talons of the Eagle' boasts a welcome ebb and blow to its pacing as the second act sees the Tracy family set their plan in motion to capture and shoot down the Eagle, leading into the electrifying third act. Fennell flexes his story-telling muscles by injecting some palpable danger into the strip's later half as I.R.'s plan goes awry in attempting to disable the Eagle without harming the crew.

The strip comes to a tidy conclusion with I.R.'s secrets intact, but what drags the strip down is the rather two-dimensional approach to the Eagle's crew. Such is the sudden arrival of the Eagle that we're forbidden from delving into how or why the United States Air Force are snooping around I.R.'s vicinity. The pilots of the craft, who remain nameless throughout, are equally robbed of any sense of identity, particularly as they spend the entirety of the strip with their facial expressions hidden behind their flight gear. However, this perhaps wouldn't have been a great concern for younger readers. The notion of I.R. having their secrets in jeopardy is a welcome opportunity to deliver an intriguing, action-packed Thunderbirds story, and 'Talons of the Eagle' fits the bill superbly.

'Talons of the Eagle' may lack any genuine rescuing as such, but its detraction from routine Thunderbirds fare makes it all the more intriguing, whilst its breakneck but well-balanced execution all the more readable.

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HEY THRILL SEEKERS!

This early Judge Dredd opening splash page from Prog 96, 20th January 1979 by Mick McMahon!

The page originally featured a huge half page splash of Judge Cal in full froth venting his bile at the populance of Mega City One.

Probably on editorial direction, the first panel was redrawn to show the exterior of the Hall of Justice, with Cal's rant blasting through load speakers, so the viewer can take in the shock of the ordinary citizen, under the watchful gaze of Cal's henchmen, the dreaded SJS.

The art was cut out and glued directly over the original splash art of Judge Cal, and with a bit of patience and luck, I managed to seperate them and reveal the art... unseen for 40 years!

So enjoy once again Judge Cal in all his manic glory! All hail Judge Fish!!!!

From the Gallery of
Cadet Judge Dayglo

SHIVER & Shake

The comic that went bump in the Newsagents

Fabulous First Issue

FREE PRACTICAL JOKE Inside...
WHICH ONE WILL YOU GET?
SHIVER and Shake
EVERY MONDAY 10th MARCH 1973
4
HELLOOOO! MY COMIC IS HAUNTED!
HI! MINE IS A REAL SOLID SCREAM, TOO!
2 COMICS in 1 DOUBLE THE FUN!

The 10th of March 1973 was a big moment for me. You see, even at the tender age of nine, I knew I was what was to be later termed as a Monster Kid of the 70's. That is to say all things spooky and creepy were deeply ingrained in my very DNA. Whether it was on film, a cartoon, or in a book or comic, if it creaked in the night, I had to have it.

So 10th of March became my introduction to IPC's new comic Shiver and Shake!

Its theme showed a lot of promise; it was two comics in one, much like IPC's popular Whizzer and Chips, with the two main characters names being the titular title of the comic itself. Shiver was a jovial rotund ghost, sort of an adult Casper, and he could be found inside adorning the strip The Duke's Spook. This was a typical comedy strip where we found Shiver at constant loggerheads with the butler Grimes who kept the manor house spotless.

Shake was, of all things, an elephant. With a name like that, the last thing that springs to mind is a portly pachyderm. The comic was split in two, with Shiver's half full of haunted hilarity strips, whereas Shake was more of the knockabout buffoonery you'd find in comics of the time.

Shiver had strips like The Hand a giant disembodied mitt that caused mischief while most of the time trying to do a good deed. Then there was Ghouldilocks, a ghost of a girl with the heart of gold. Let us not forget Webster, a slapstick spider with a lot of cheek.

The standout strip for me in the Shiver half of the comic was Scream Inn, drawn with lots of spooky cross hatching by Brian Walker, which featured a haunted hotel where the reward of a million pounds was offered to any living soul who could last the night. By the way, no one ever did. But this strip was turned into a board game as well, so it was double fun for a kid like me, for not only could I read about it but I could play like I was in it as well!

The most popular spooky strip was Frankie Stein, a creation of the dynamic Ken Reid that had its origins in Wham back in the 60's. Years later Frankie found a home here, only this time drawn by Robert Nixon, whose pencils were the equal of Reid's, though the scripts were a little more refined. Frankie Stein was a stumble foot, a good natured though accident prone monster with more than a striking resemblance to Boris Karloff in the old Universal Monster series of films from the 1930's.

And we'd better not leave out Sweeny Toddler, Leo Baxendale's nefarious nipper in a nappy who was always up to no good. Evil plans were hatched only to be foiled at the end of the one page strip, and most often with his mum being none the wiser as to what the demon in a diaper had been up to. I don't know about you, but I

always wanted Sweeny to win for once. It's good to root for the bad guy once in a while.

There was Grimly Fiendish too, another bad egg who first started out in the pages of Wham! He was the arch nemesis of Eagle Eye, Junior Spy, though unlike Sweeny, Grimly was a character I genuinely found creepy.

Shake's half was more of what we were used to, with titles like Moana Lisa, a bad tempered little girl whose constant griping would more often than not make matters much worse for her. I secretly thought when I was a kid that she was only happy when she had something to whinge about anyway.

Desert Fox was another favourite of mine. The title of this one tells it all, as we find our cunning little chap among the sand dunes during WWII, always foraging for the next meal. His interfering often helped the Allies and hindered the Hun.

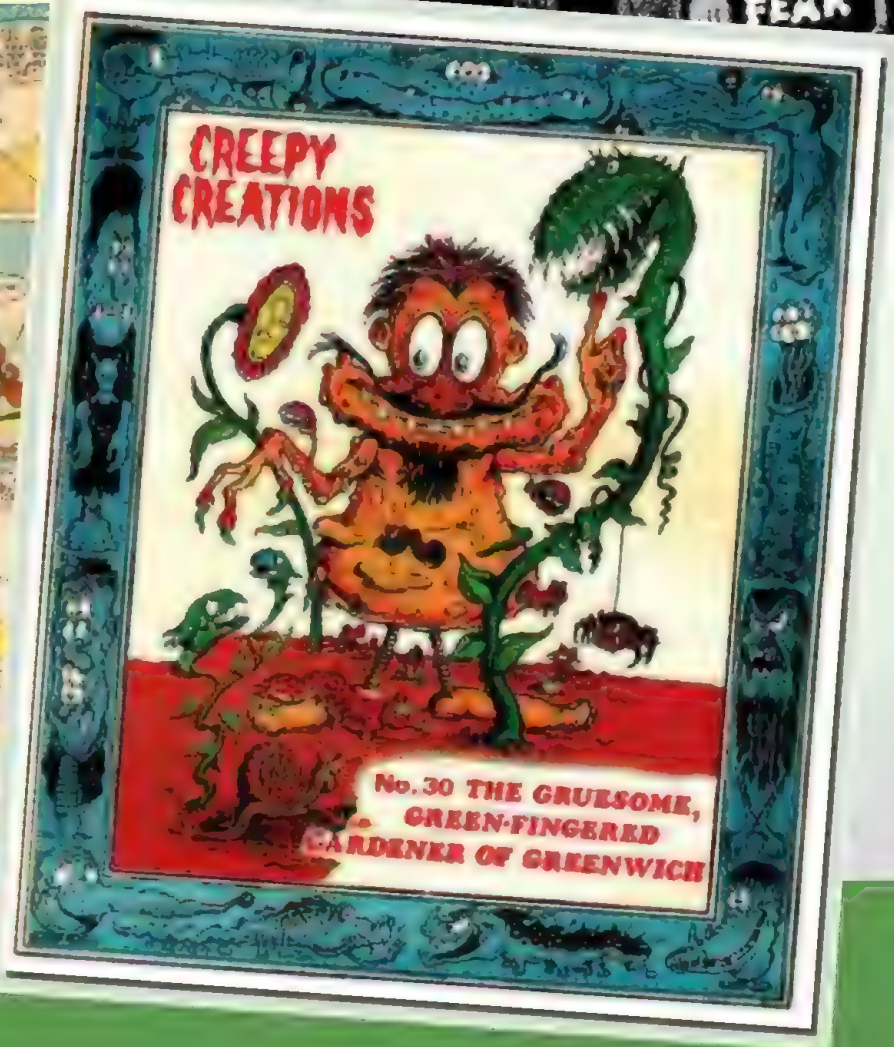
Then there was Charlie Williams, a strip based on a real life stand-up comedian, focussing more on his northern accent than Charlie's skin colour. While Marvel Comics in the US were breaking down barriers regarding ethnicity, with characters like the Black Panther and Luke Cage, Hero for Hire, so we over this side of the pond were doing it with a little moresubtlety!

There was Tough Nutt and Softy Centre which was always an odd one for me. It was your run of the mill bully constantly picking on his weaker, simpering target. This strip was on occasion different, wherein we'd find Softy to be equally as ruthless, if not more so than Tough Nutt.

Strips like the Fixer and Lolly Pop rounded out Shake's half, along with his own strip. And what rounded the comic out for me was the back page where you'd find a poster created and drawn by the twisted mind of Ken Reid. Creepy Creations would bring us a slavering, many tentacled ooze dripping monstrosity every week. I need not add that these adorned the walls of my bedroom, ruining the anaglyptic wallpaper and getting me a telling off from mum. What was worse was it ruined my comics as they fell apart. Oh the folly of youth.

Shiver and Shake ran for a little over 80 issues, finishing in 1974. Some strips went on to other titles such as Monster Fun, while others fell into obscurity. I recently found some old back issues on eBay, and they fetch a few pennies these days and rightly so, for Shiver and Shake is now recognised as a British classic. And if you can find an issue with any of the jokes, such as the fake plastic choccy biccy, or the joke spoon with the hole in it…well snap them up because it's like discovering the Ark of the Covenant!

And flicking through the musty old pages, I find myself thinking back to the carefree days of childhood. I think it's a time a lot of us would like to return to. So tell me…who's coming with me?



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HATCH, MATCH AND DISPATCH: Valiant and Lion

Cover date: 25 May 1974

By David Moloney

What a mighty handshake! Swarthy flesh grasps gleaming metal. Surely this coming together of beefcake soldier boys Captain Hurricane, representing the mighty Valiant, and The Steel Commando, representing the thundersome Lion, marked the opening of a powerful new chapter for British comics

In fact, it represents a dying of the light – the beginning of the end of a long-standing, bountiful age of muscular and fantastical boys' adventure comics from IPC/Fleetway.

For the previous couple of decades, Lion (since 1952) and Valiant (1962) had offered a rich if unsophisticated mix of larger-than-life heroes and villains in exaggerated action tales and humour strips. Stablemates Tiger (1954) and Buster (1960) had not dissimilar content, and the boys' market also carried broad-stroke adventure titles such as The Hotspur, Hornet, The Victor and The Wizard from DC Thomson, and the Odhams Press 'Power Comics' line that included Wham!, Smash! and Pow!

But times were changing. By 1974, a trend had started for British comic titles to become more genre-specific. Tiger had been re-cast as a sports-only paper, and Buster shed the majority of its adventure serials on the path to becoming a humour only comic.

DC Thomson would introduce Warlord, a war themed title, in September, and secret plans for a rival were being hatched behind closed doors at IPC (by a team largely comprising staffers and freelancers who had been working in the girls' comics department). The number of titles on the IPC roster was rationalised in 1974, quite brutally even by this publisher's standards. In that single year, as well as Valiant and Lion, Scorcher was merged into Tiger, Cor!! into Buster, Shiver and Shake into Whoopee! and June into Tammy.

And, perhaps most significantly for old guard titles such as Lion and Valiant, new voices were starting to be heard in British comics. Heroes were becoming more textured, dialogue less public school and story resolutions less happily-ever-after. This new wave had started in the girls' comics department, with Tammy, launched in 1971 under the editorship of Gerry Finley-Day, offering storylines and lead characters more realistic and relatable to its readers than the likes of June and School Friend, Princess or Girl had been publishing in the previous couple of decades. Jinty, in a similar style to Tammy, was launched in May 1974, just a fortnight before the merger of Valiant and Lion. The streetwise Lindy ran in the summer of 1975, and the gothic, often disturbing supernatural mystery paper Misty ran from 1978 to early 1980. The second half of the 1970s saw the profile of IPC boys' list transformed by new comics with a grittier, punkier style: Battle Picture Weekly (1975), Action (1976), 2000AD (1977) and Starlord (1978). Even the humour titles list found a more irreverent, some would say anarchic, voice through Monster Fun (1975), Krazy (1976) and Cheeky (1977).

'Everything seemed dandy to my untutored eye,' says Steve MacManus, who had only just joined IPC in 1973 as assistant to Valiant editor Stewart Wales. 'However, to those who had been at Fleetway for a good long time, and especially in the boys' department, the merger of Lion into Valiant must have engendered the sense of an ending – especially as the torch to launch new titles had been handed elsewhere.'

Steve's counterpart on Lion was Chris Lowder. Having worked on the title since 1968 (apart from nine unhappy months on Buster), Chris had a sense that its time was up. 'Such was the atmosphere in IPC at that time that neither Geoff [Kemp, Lion editor] nor I were hugely surprised. Circulations were plummeting all through the juveniles department – and across the board in IPC generally. You felt as though you were living on a fault-line in the middle of the Ring of Fire in the Pacific!'

The order to merge the two titles would have passed down from Jack Le Grand, managing editor of the boys' division,

and Sid Bicknell, assistant managing editor. Steve reckons that Sid would have lobbied for Lion to be merged into Valiant, despite being the older of the two titles. Chris, however, believes the decision would have come from higher up. 'At the time of the merger Lion was doing better than Valiant, circulation-wise,' he remembers. 'Thus Valiant should have been merged into Lion, and not t'other way round. However the guy who'd dreamed up Valiant was Jack Le Grand. He was certainly not going to let his brainchild go down the Swannee, so Lion had to go. I recall a lunch with him in the old Red Lion, off Fleet Street, when Geoff and I were trying to persuade him to see sense. Jack banged his fist down on the table and said, "Well, you'll just have to facking put up with it!" So we did.'

[Note: since interviewing Chris and Steve, I found a useful discussion of the merger on the Comics UK forum (www.comicsuk.co.uk/forum; thread: 'Thunder's merge with Lion') which suggests, with the backing of ABC sales figures, that Valiant may in fact have had a higher circulation than Lion at the time.]

For whatever reason, Valiant took the spoils. Lion remained a part of the comic's title for ten further months, after which its cover banner reverted to just Valiant. John Wagner took over as the comic's editor during 1975, tasked with re-imagining it for the expectations of the fast-changing marketplace – which to a great extent he did, bringing in tougher stories such as One-Eyed Jack, Soldier Sharp, Death Wish and Wee Red, but it was not enough to save Valiant being merged into Battle in October 1976.

In May 1974, much of the content of the newly merged Valiant and Lion was completely new stories. Eric Bradbury was the artist on two new adventure serials, Danny Doom and Valley of the Giants (the latter having a competition element in which readers had to identify creatures that appeared each week, for a prize of 'one of the FIFTY POUND NOTES we are offering' – that's 50 x £1 notes rather than £50 notes, I was disappointed to realise after a double-take). The Lincoln Green Mob told the adventures of a Robin Hood-style modern-day gang of lads, and Trail to Nowhere was a Western serial drawn by Mike, er, Western. Mike would also draw virtually every cover of Valiant and Lion; following the Hurricane/Commando cover on this launch issue, he started an educational cover series called The Rivals, replacing the Who Is It? series he had drawn for a number of years for the front of Valiant. One further new strip was Challenge Charlie!, in which readers sent in their dares to the brave, if gullible, title character whose attempts to rise to them were drawn by Frank McDiarmid.

Carried over from Lion were the near-immortal time-travelling adventurer Adam Eterno, drawn by Solano Lopez, Zip Nolan, drawn by Joe Colquhoun, and Reg Parlett's cartoon adventures of castle cat Mowser. As heralded on the cover, Lion's Steel Commando was teamed up with Valiant's Captain Hurricane: 'a pathetic pairing that tarnished the good Captain's reputation and changed his strip from being faintly ridiculous to just plain silly,' according to Steve in his The Mighty One memoir. In the final panel, Hurricane raged: 'A signal from H.Q.! They're so delighted with the result of this mission that they've decided to post the Steel Commando to this unit [... and then, conditionally:] for at least the next few weeks!' Steel Commando was out ('Sent to join a new unit in the Far East!') before the end of June. The only other Valiant strips to survive the merger were Kid Pharaoh, drawn by Julio Schiaffino, Billy Bunter, drawn by Reg Parlett, and Angel Nadal's The Nutts. Dick Emery's Airfix Modellers Club page continued, having featured previously in both titles (and Buster).

A few old favourites from both Valiant (Yellowknife of the Yard, Janus Stark, Raven on the Wing, The Wild Wonders) and Lion (Robot Archie, The Spellbinder) would make brief reappearances in the merged comic during the following year, but others were gone for good. The previous issue of Valiant saw the final instalments of Leo Baxendale's The Swots and the Blots, Kelly's Eye and School for Spies, and, in Lion, Marty Wayne, The Team Terry Kept in a Box, Masters of Menace, Sark the Sleeper, The Last of the Harkers and The 10,000 Disasters of Dort.

But while many of the stories changed, the Valiant staff (Stewart and Steve, plus art editor Janet Shepheard and her assistant Alan Wardley) kept their jobs on the new title. Steve would progress the following year to Battle, then to the editorship of 2000AD for many stellar years before launching a more mature range of titles including Crisis for Fleetway in the late 1980s.

The Lion team (including Geoff, Chris and art assistant Johnny Burns, nephew of artist John Burns) were given other work within the company. 'For starters,' recalls Chris, 'I had to finish putting together an annual I'd dreamed up and got commissioned: The Lion Book of Mystery and Magic. I filled it full of all kinds of stuff I was interested in, reprints of The Spellbinder, plus a brand new full colour story featuring a writer called H. C. Likecraft (by me, with the wonderful Geoff Campion painting it), plus ghost stories and strips, and magic stuff. Of course, The Lion Book of Mystery and Magic ended up as The Valiant Book of Mystery and Magic. Such is life ...'

He and Geoff also put together World of Wonder for IPC, and Headlines magazine ('a rip-off "true crime" mag with sensational stuff like the crash of the Hindenberg, the General Strike, Jack the Ripper, and that kind of thing') and pitched ideas for new titles such as a full-colour sword and sorcery monthly, for which – sadly – the costs were prohibitive. As a writer, Chris has had a prolific career, writing (among many other comics and books) Blackjack and Hell's Highway for Action, Dan Dare and Judge Dredd for 2000AD, Ro-Busters for Starlord, often under pseudonyms including Jack Adrian.

He holds Lion in high regard though. 'I was delighted to have been placed on the Lion staff since I enjoyed the paper as a boy (from number one), and always thought it was superior in many ways to Eagle [its original rival]. Dan Dare was Establishment in a big way, whereas Lion's Captain Condor was a rebel with all the forces of the Dictator of Earth after him. I think that sums up the crucial difference. Eagle was thumpingly middle class; Lion wasn't.'

Steve has similarly fond memories of Valiant, also the comic he had read as a boy. 'Even though it was a weekly, the wait for the next issue seemed interminable. The Steel Claw was dark and thrilling, while the more comical strips like The Wild Wonders always entertained. I don't think Valiant carried a single bad strip in its long and varied history.'

With thanks to Chris Lowder, Steve MacManus, Stephen Jewell and David MacDonald.

Andrew David Mulloy
Twitter: @DMulloy
Website: [illegible]

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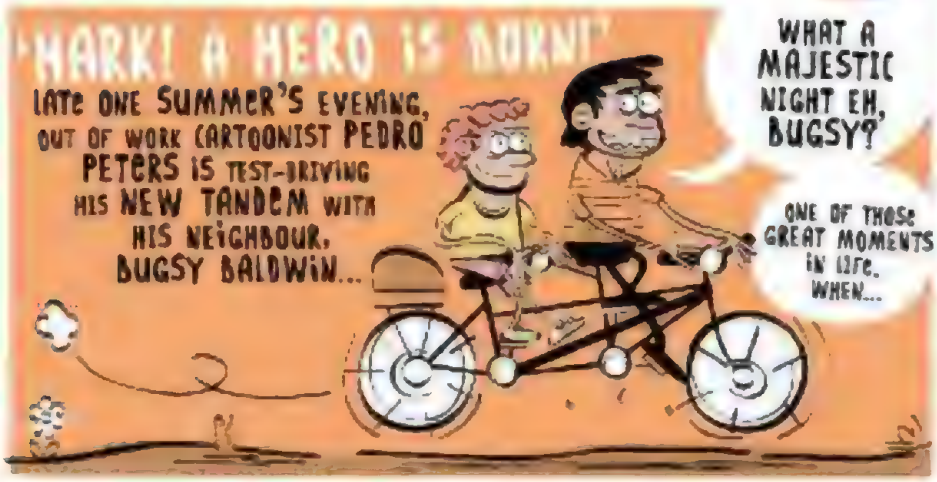
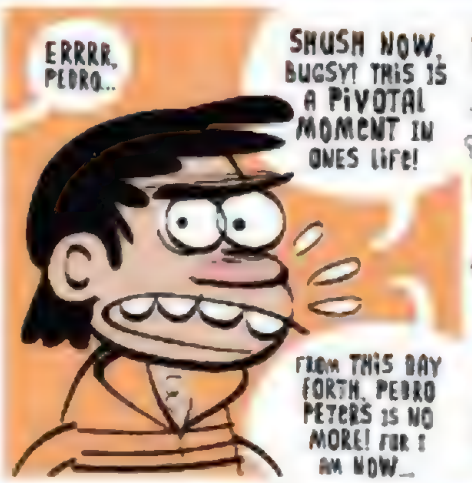
WHACKOMAN! BY MARC JACKSON


HARK! A HERO IS BORN!
LATE ONE SUMMER'S EVENING, OUT OF WORK CARTOONIST PEDRO PETERS IS TEST-DRIVING HIS NEW TANDEM WITH HIS NEIGHBOUR, BUGSY BALDWIN...
WHAT A MAJESTIC NIGHT EH, BUGSY?
ONE OF THOSE GREAT MOMENTS IN LIFE. WHEN...



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The Growth of

Cosplay is the amalgamation of the words costume and play. It is something that has been around for hundreds of years, but with the popularity of conventions and the current superhero bubble, the amount of people that cosplay has exploded in recent years. Cosplaying is still seen as an unusual niche area by the media and general public, but at big conventions like MCM London, over 50% of attendees will be in costume on at least one of the days.

Cosplayers portray characters from many different fandoms, ranging from sci-fi and comics, through to video games and anime. The surge in popularity of 'geek culture' has seen the rise and fall of many conventions, but it has also meant that cosplaying has become more accessible to many people, and is more acceptable in society. No longer is dressing up as your favourite character seen as a once a year occurrence. Cosplaying is no longer seen as something people have to feel ashamed of, as even the celebrities that people flock to conventions to see such as Daniel Radcliffe, Nathan Fillion and Jamie Lee Curtis have been spotted wandering around in cosplay.

Most conventions people go to will now have cosplay guests and a cosplay competition for people to show off their amazing outfits. Whilst traditional conventions have always been known for 'booth babes', those with a cosplay section and competitions focus on those that have spent many a night slaving away on their own costumes. There are now entire conventions that solely focus on cosplaying, just like back in the day when people would attend conventions just for their love of Sci-Fi.

As cosplaying has grown, more materials and sources have become available that were not around ten or more years ago. As well as using household bits and pieces and giant foam mats, more expensive items such as worbla and other thermoplastics are easily accessible from online stores. Cosplayers have their own blogs and YouTube channels where tutorials are readily available, so it is much easier to get started in the cosplay world than ever before

Cosplaying in Asia has always been popular as it coincides with the massive anime culture, but it did not really pick up over in the west until conventions like San Diego Comic Con started. Sci-Fi and comic book fanatics have always enjoyed dressing up as their favourite characters, but the media sensation over cosplay really took hold when cosplayers such Jessica Nigri got noticed at to San Diego Comic Con for their sexier takes on characters. When Nigri's popularity exploded, many girls aspired to be like her.

Yaya Han and Kamui cosplay are two of the other biggest names in the cosplay world that have also really helped grow the scene. Although they have both been cosplaying for a lot longer than Nigri, it wasn't until the rise of cosplay in the media that they really became known. Both Yaya and Kamui started out by making costumes of characters from their respective fandoms, and now they both run successful businesses within the cosplay world.

Yaya is known for her amazing seamstress skills, and even has her own fabric range and patterns that cosplayers can use. Kamui Cosplay is one of the best armour makers in

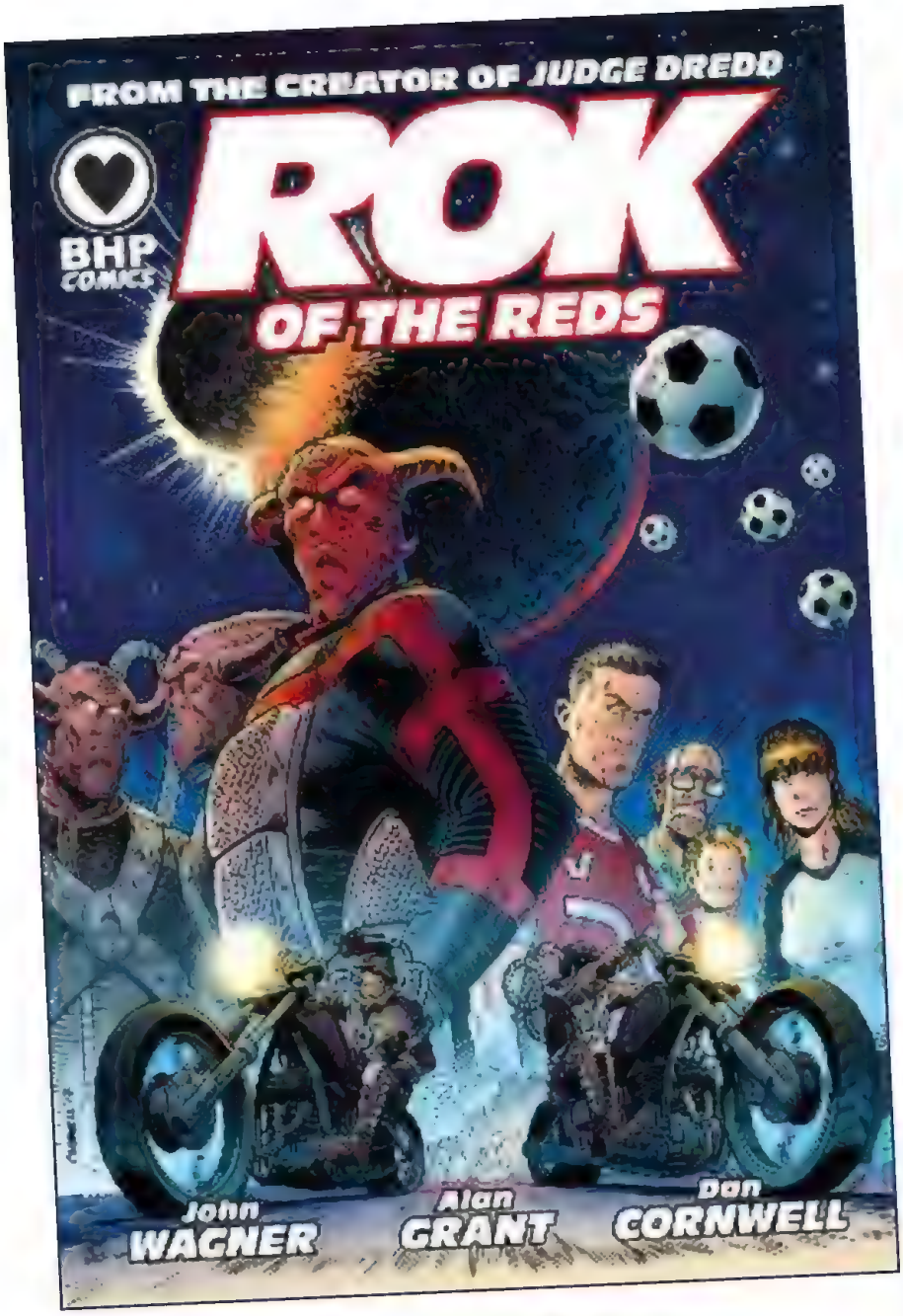
Cosplay

the world, and she has published multiple books on the various techniques she uses to make her outfits. Both Yaya and Kamui will always help and answer questions from aspiring cosplayers and have hosted many panels and tutorials to share their expertise. There is an endless list of impressive male cosplayers too, such as Hoku Props and Harley's Joker, but male cosplayers often suffer from the fact the media would rather see a pretty female in a skin-tight costume than a talented male cosplayer.

The cosplay scene has changed a lot over the past few years. When cosplayers such as Yaya and Kamui Cosplay started, there was no information available and it was all about the crafting side of things and transforming into a character that you loved. Now, it has been overtaken by the 'sexy cosplay' trend, and models that were not interested in the geek culture before now dress as people's favourite characters to join in on the current bandwagon.

The word 'cos-famous' is used by people that want to use cosplay as a quick way to fame rather than doing it for the love of a character. Like X-Factor and other reality shows back when they first started, being 'cos-famous' is seen as a quick way to get noticed. This has garnered even more media attention, but newspapers and websites are constantly publishing negative articles focussed on the sexy side rather than portraying the positive side of cosplaying. The need to be famous has also created a darker side to the community, but this is all soon forgotten on the convention floor or at the many costumed convention after parties as we're all just one big group of geeks dressed in costumes.

Trying to get started in the cosplay world in a daunting prospect, but it really is something for everyone. It can be a hobby, or you can do it on more of a professional level, but there is a massive community both at conventions and online that supports cosplayers no matter what stage of the cosplay journey they are on. Putting on a costume of our favourite character can give people an inner confidence that they never knew they had, and has changed the lives of many people.



How we created...

ROK OF THE REDS

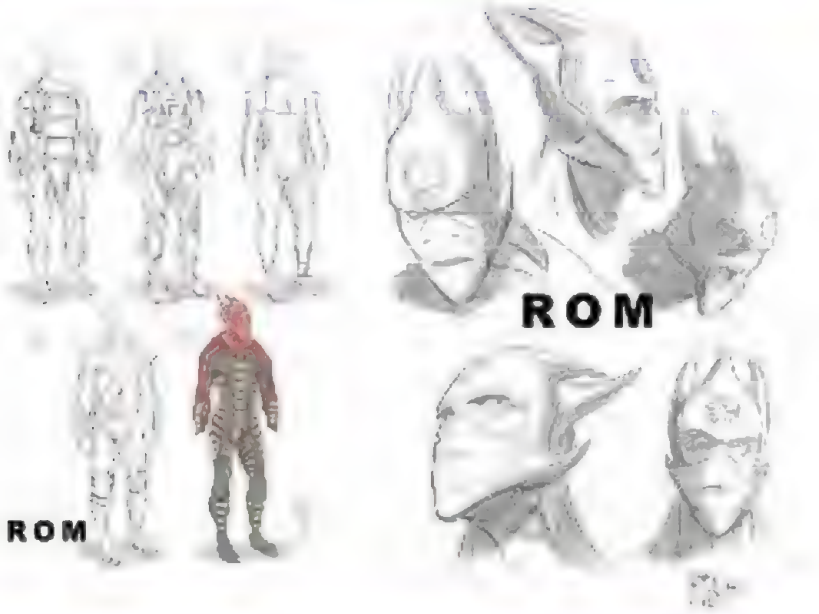
By John Wagner

I say we because I've never created a complete comic story on my own. Some professionals are lucky enough to be able to draw as well as write, but I'm not in that category. For me they're all team efforts and I'm glad that's the case. It means I've had the opportunity to work with a lot of very talented artists (and other writers) who have brought their own skill and insight to the final product.

The inspiration for a story can come from anywhere. It can be the product of a lifetime of observation, it can be a riff on another idea or concept, it can spring from something as simple as an overheard remark. The birth of Rok, though, is a bit more unusual and convoluted than most.

Let's go back 25 years or so. Co-writer Alan Grant and I live close enough to each other that we can handle our normal workload during the day and get together on other projects in the evening. It's how we wrote Judgment on Gotham, the first Dredd/Batman team up, The Bogie Man and many others. The project we're working on now is a big one, a new anthology comic comprising 7-8 stories. One of those stories, in the old British comic tradition, would be about football. But what? So many had been written, so many angles covered, it would be close to impossible to find something new, new and exciting, something that had never been done before.

I can't remember which of us hit on the idea - aliens. What about the world's first alien footballer?



Orignal Rok of the Reds Rom concept drawings.

We were off and running. We talked around the idea for a few nights, building a bank of ideas, working out direction and key developments. We'd created other stories about aliens on Earth in the past, and the work we'd done and themes we'd explored were drawn in to the mix. Finally we wrote the first script. It was only a few pages long, but I can remember us laughing like drains. Oh that Dixon, what a rat! Nobody deserves his comeuppance more than him. We loved that script, we knew the readers would too, and then…

And then we stuck it away in a file for a quarter of a century.

We'd analysed the entire project and come to the conclusion that if we went ahead it would probably bankrupt us. Better to stick to things that actually earned money. We eventually used some of the stories, or parts of them, but Rok languished unused in my filing cabinet. Who was buying football stories these days, even weird ones?

Three or so years ago, considering retirement, tired of the work I'd been doing, I decided to try some new projects. To the 'ideas' file in my trusty cabinet I went, and drew out…Randy Truckers in Space. This was another creation of my partnership with Alan Grant, another story that had ended up abandoned – a space porn comedy intended for Penthouse until Penthouse closed their title down. I read it and it was indeed funny – think of it as "Carry On Spaceman".

I liked it, decided to work it up into a full script, intending to self-publish. While up in Glasgow for a convention Sha Nazir, who heads Black Hearted Press, suggested I let them publish it, and fearful of dealing with printers, marketing, all the other things I know little about, I agreed.

As luck would have it I couldn't get an artist to draw the bloody thing. It had to be someone good, someone whose work I knew would fit the story, but after my two first choices initially agreed, then pulled out, I'd had enough of trying. Fate was telling me I shouldn't be writing a porn story.

So back to the file I went and pulled out… Rom of the Rovers. It was our original spoof title for the story. Rovers was scrapped first, that was never intended to survive, followed by Rom after news came out about the (very litigious) Mattel picking up Rom Space Knight.

Fine. Rok was a much better name anyway. Rok of the Reds. It had a ring to it.

I expanded our first episode and worked out a rough outline for a 6 issue, US-style mini-series. Now all I had to do was find our artist. It couldn't be a pro. It had to be someone who could work for the kind of poverty rates I could afford to pay. I went straight to Dave Evans's two 2000AD-related fanzines, Zarjaz and Dogbreath. Dave has been nurturing new talent in them for years and has many talented contributors who would be snowed under with work if the UK comic industry had not shrunk to near vanishing point.

One artist that particularly stood out was Dan Cornwell. I liked his line, his attention to detail, the level of character he put into his people and his stylish execution. If I remember correctly I sent him an email… Have you any interest in football?

I'm pleased to say that he did. His first task was to create our twin heroes, Rok and Kyle Dixon. I hadn't up to this point given much thought to what Rok actually looked like – that's the sort of detail I rely on my talented artists for!

Once Dan had Rok down to our mutual satisfaction we were off and running again – a mere quarter century since we were first off and running.

Owing to other work commitments Dan couldn't handle the colouring. Matt Smith at 2000AD was kind enough to send me samples of colourists they used, and Dan and I both picked out Abby Bulmer as the one we wanted for Rok. A good choice. Her colours have been just right, quite stunning at times.

That only left the lettering. I've always regarded good lettering as a vital piece of the jigsaw, so we were very pleased to welcome Jim Campbell aboard. He handles a lot of the mechanics of putting the comic together and his sound effects are superb.

And that is how we created Rok of the Reds. That's only part of it, of course, there was still a lot of hard work to do on the part of BHP – bringing the comic together, printing it, publicising, marketing, selling.

But that's a whole other story.

Author: John Wagner
Twitter: Rok of the Reds published by @BHP_Comics
Website: http://www.bhpcomics.com/
Rok of the Reds Graphic Novel available now

THE CARTMEL FACTOR

There has been a Doctor Who comic strip for almost as long as there has been a Doctor Who television programme. Ever since William Hartnell's First Doctor took off in the TARDIS with his grandchildren John and Gillian in TV Comic in 1964, the Doctor's adventures have been as entertaining on the printed page as they have on TV. When the UK arm of Marvel Comics began their Doctor Who Weekly in 1979, the Doctor's comic strip adventures entered a new era of sophistication. The Weekly metamorphosed into the monthly Doctor Who Magazine (DWM) and Doctors Four, Five and Six all enjoyed a run of memorable adventures. Then, in 1987, Sylvester McCoy became the Doctor on television and a new era of classic Doctor Who comic strips began in earnest.

1987 was a new beginning for Doctor Who in more ways than one. Although the programme's long-serving producer John Nathan-Turner continued to oversee the show, he was to be joined by a new script editor - Canadian-raised Andrew Cartmel. Cartmel had been working for a computer company in Cambridge when the opportunity arose for him to work on the programme. He had previously attended workshops at the BBC Script Unit and had sent scripts to an agent who had agreed to take him on. This lead to a meeting with Nathan-Turner and Cartmel being offered the chance to join the Doctor Who team.

Cartmel was unashamedly a reader of comics. As he told the We Are Cult website in 2017, one of his biggest influences was unquestionably Alan Moore: 'I was a big fan of comics when I was working on the show. Or, more accurately, a big fan of Alan Moore's Swamp Thing and V for Vendetta. There were a few other creators whose work I read at the time… Frank Miller, Love & Rockets by the Hernandez Brothers and Howard Chaykin's American Flagg… but really, compared to Alan Moore they hardly existed.'

It is true Andrew Cartmel's Doctor Who episodes felt very much like a televisual comic strip. Many of the characters were larger than life, such as the villainous Chief Caretaker (Richard Briers) in Stephen Wyatt's Paradise Towers (1987) or the Thatcher-like Helen A (Sheila Hancock) in Graeme Curry's The Happiness Patrol (1988). Some of the Colin Baker television stories had been a little conservative in their approach, prompting many to comment that the programme was beginning to feel tired. But under Cartmel, the show became more experimental, displaying the imagination and innovation of the comic writers which Cartmel so admired.

After an unsteady first series for McCoy (the scripts having largely been written before the writers had a clear idea of what sort of character the Seventh Doctor would be) the programme's 25th anniversary season in 1988 saw Cartmel and his writing team really hit their stride. Stories such as Remembrance of the Daleks and Silver Nemesis hinted

> **"Evening's Empire' was my most ambitious work and the one of which I was (& am) most proud"**

that the Doctor may in fact have been much older than previous episodes had suggested and that he may have been a contemporary of the legendary Gallifreyan figures, Rassilon and Omega. This attempt to make the character more mysterious has become known as the Cartmel Masterplan. Alas, the Masterplan was to be cut short when the BBC axed the programme in 1989.

But all was not lost because the Seventh Doctor was already as well established in the comic strip medium as he had been on television…

The first DWM Seventh Doctor comic strip, A Cold Day in Hell, written by Simon Furman and drawn by John Ridgway (November 1987 to February 1988), saw the return of the classic 1960s monsters, the Ice Warriors. It was a suitably traditional story with which to begin the new era and Ridgway (a veteran of the Sixth Doctor strips) faced the challenge of drawing the new Doctor before he had been properly seen on television.

Interviewed in the comics fanzine Eagle Flies Again in 2003, Ridgway recalled the process of depicting real life actors in comic strip form: 'I found that copying faces from photographs was difficult at first, but having drawn a face a few times it started to become easier. The problem with trying to draw a comic around a known actor is that there are rarely photographs with the right expression, angle or writing… I can't honestly remember if I was short of references for Sylvester's face, but Sylvester has a face that is easily caricatured!'

The task of drawing the Doctor would become slightly easier from 1988 onwards due to the initiative of incoming DWM editor John Freeman who would oversee a huge chunk of the Seventh Doctor's comic strip adventures. Visiting recording of Doctor Who on location, Freeman asked Sylvester McCoy to pose for reference photos for the comic artists - during shooting of The Greatest Show in the Galaxy in 1988 and again during a recording break in the sweltering heat of summer 1989 during the making of the final televised story of Doctor Who's classic run, Survival.

The McCoy strips quickly established themselves as an important part of DWM. And there was no shortage of top drawer contributors willing to participate, with writers such as Grant Morrison, Dan Abnett and Alan Grant and artists such as Geoff Senior and Kev Hopgood all working on the stories.

Some of the early Seventh Doctor strips were quite light in tone, reflecting the more humorous Season 24 persona of the Doctor. As the TV show became darker and more multi-layered, the comic strips followed suit. On TV, the Doctor had become Time's Champion, a master manipulator of cosmic events playing chess on an intergalactic scale, and this began to feed through to the strip.

A particular highlight came in the form of Nemesis of the Daleks (September to December 1989), an excellent story written by Steve Alan, featuring the return of the popular Abslom Daak character from the early Doctor Who Weekly. This was a very dark and moody story with some strong links to established television continuity and superb visual depictions of the Daleks by artist Lee Sullivan who had been a fan of the classic 'TV21' Dalek strips.

As noted above, the Doctor Who TV show came off the air in 1989. But the Seventh Doctor's future on the printed page was already assured. In much the way that comics had influenced the direction in which Cartmel steered the programme, the increased sophistication of the television episodes began to feed back into the strips.

YOU ARE THE DOCTOR!
YOU ARE AN ENEMY OF THE DALEKS –
YES, YES! LOOK, YOU NEEDN'T HAVE GONE TO ALL THIS TROUBLE... A SIMPLE CUP OF TEA AND A BISCUIT WOULD HAVE –

The comic strip continued to follow the TV series' lead, further developing the Seventh Doctor's darker nature and the relationship between the Doctor and his companion Ace, and Cartmel himself joined the team of writers contributing to the strip. He was to be particularly pleased with his work on the story Evening's Empire, the first episode of which was published in DWM and the rest in a one-off edition of its sister publication Doctor Who Classic Comics in 1993. Beautifully illustrated by Richard Piers Rayner, this was a classic story as Cartmel told We Are Cult: Evening's Empire was my most ambitious work and the one of which I was (and am) most proud. It was like a Seventh Doctor TV story but with an unlimited budget – and also slightly darker, more abstract and more adult.' He was also satisfied with The Good Soldier (pencils by Mike Collins and inks by Steve Pini, published July to October 1991), 'A Cyberman story I wrote, which I think was very good and made imaginative use of the possibilities of the Cybermen in a way which I still don't think has been explored or achieved by the show.'

Other established writers such as Paul Cornell and Marc Platt (writer of Ghost Light – the final Cartmel-edited Doctor Who TV story to be made) would also contribute to the strip. It was a classic era for Doctor Who in the comic strip medium.

The absence of new Doctor Who on television meant that Sylvester McCoy enjoyed a much longer run as the 'incumbent' comic strip Doctor than he might overwise have done. He bowed out in the story Ground Zero in 1996. With the arrival of the Doctor Who TV movie starring Paul McGann, there was a new, Eighth Doctor to take up the baton.

In early 2018 came the news that an exciting new era for the Seventh Doctor comic strips was about to begin. Back in the editor's chair, John Freeman was to oversee a new mini-series of Seventh Doctor adventures published by Titan Comics, utilising characters created for the TV series by Ben Aaronovitch, written by Andrew Cartmel, with artwork provided by Christopher Jones. This new story, Operation Volcano, sees the Doctor and Ace once again meet up with Group Captain Ian Gilmore and other characters from Aaronovitch's classic 1988 television story Remembrance of the Daleks. With four superb variant covers for the first issue and a back-up-strip written by Richard Dinnick and drawn by Jessica Martin, it's clear that fans of the Seventh Doctor have a lot to look forward to.

ComicScene UK catches up with John Freeman who, as editor of Doctor Who Magazine from 1988 to 1992, oversaw many of the Seventh Doctor comic strips...

How did the Andrew Cartmel script-edited TV episodes influence the direction of the comic strip?

I'm a lifelong fan of comics and Doctor Who and was determined the strip should remain an element of the Magazine, even though its production gobbled up a high proportion - nearly 50 per cent! - of the title's then (roughly) £2000 budget per issue. At that time, it was probably the only part of the title that could potentially be re-purposed in collections, something else I hoped we could achieve.

Every editor of the comic strip has their own approach to the strip and Richard Starkings, who was editing the strip before me, was genuinely inventive during his run, employing a huge range of creators, both writers and artists, including me. When I took over, I liked the variety of creators involved but I did feel though that we needed strips that in some ways brought the strip closer to the TV show in terms of styling (albeit with no effects budget limitations!) in an effort to have it resonate more with readers, which was the feedback I was getting from them, and from creators champing at the bit for a break, like Paul Cornell and Scott Gray.

When I met Andrew Cartmel at a Christmas party in Shepherd's Bush and he volunteered he'd like to write a strip, I almost bit his arm off. Having someone who was so integral to the show writing the strip gave it a legitimacy we'd never had before, and the Doctor Who strip had never had.

This is, I need to stress, by no means to dismiss the incredible work of anyone writing past strips - I love the Pertwee stories in Countdown and the strips such as 'The Iron Legion' which made Doctor Who Weekly a must buy when it launched in 1979, and Steve Parkhouse's scripts for the Fifth and Sixth Doctor, complemented by John Ridgway's art on the latter.

But from the point of view of publishing a title that was fighting for survival when I became editor, we needed to re-sell the Magazine to 'lost readers', so being able to sell the strip in to Diamond (who then solely distributed the title in the US as well as UK comic shops, and only used the strip to sell the title in, really) with a TV name attached certainly wouldn't hurt advance orders. Plus, from a creative point of view I really liked what the Seventh Doctor became in Seasons 25 and 26, and wanted more of the same for the strip. Who better to write some stories and give us a steer on how to 'direct' the character than one of the Seventh Doctor's principal architects?

How do you think the McCoy strips differed from the Colin Baker ones?

There were a lot more shorter stories, initially, with good reason I think. We genuinely feared for a while the title would be cancelled. No-one wanted a story half-finished if that had happened, so epics were out. That said, and you'd have to ask Richard Starkings for confirmation, some of the creators he com-

missioned were huge comic talents and writing Who was one small part of their work for Marvel UK in some cases. They simply didn't have time to write or draw the long form sprawling, wonderful epics Steve Parkhouse did.

There was also an element for Richard, I believe, of creators getting to 'do Who' as part and parcel of getting them on board Marvel UK, an element of his wider publishing strategy of trying to make the company as exciting and inspiring to work for as working on rival titles for IPC, 2000AD in particular. Richard had achieved some success persuading MD Robert Sutherland to give the green light to MUK's own non-licensed characters such as Dragon's Claws, and commissioning Who strips, alongside commissioning Ghostbusters, Transformers etc was all part of that master plan.

Why do you think the character of the Seventh Doctor is so suited to the comic strip medium?

Doctor Who in general is made for the comics medium, never mind the Seventh Doctor. I don't think any Doctor commands a special place in the comics pantheon and the work very different publishers have released across over 50 years confirms that.

Did you change the direction of the comic strip when the TV show ended?

Not really. There was a very real sense that the Magazine was along with the New Adventures novels, a guardian of Who mythos until the TV show returned, if it was ever going to. So I took the approach that we were continuing the Doctor's adventures as they might have run on TV, albeit in comic form, which meant having TV writers Andrew and Marc Platt on board, as well as a host of other creators I felt 'got' the Seventh Doctor, was really important.

That said, I did feel not every Who story pitched at me (and there were loads, including stories by Ben Aaronovitch and actor Nabil Shaban, who played Sil opposite Colin Baker's Doctor) weren't what I, personally was looking for.

Despite the TV show being off air, I hope I got more assured in my commissioning as I progressed as editor, and averting the title's cancellation meant we could run some longer stories as well as short one-off tales.

I think, looking back, that the fact that we could never get a straight answer out of the BBC about the show's future helped keep the Seventh Doctor in the strip far longer than he might have done had they been more open. If there had been a point where the BBC had firmly stated the show is over, we'd perhaps have started doing 'past doctor' stories sooner and more often, which is what Gary Russell (John's successor as DWM editor – I.W.) rightly started to do.

What do you think is the lasting legacy of the McCoy comic strips?

I think that perhaps lies with who wrote and drew some of the strips rather than the Seventh Doctor's legacy. I gave Paul Cornell his first professional comics commission and Scott Gray too, who've both brought so much to Doctor Who since. It was a pleasure to work with and foster new talent as well as established talents, such as Lee Sullivan and John Ridgway. Along with the text stories I introduced to the title, many creators got a chance to write a Doctor Who story and it's fantastic that they weren't put off by my editing and stuck to their chosen path!

What are your hopes for your new Seventh Doctor comic?

That we reignite the Seventh Doctor as a comics character, just as Titan Comics has done with other incarnations, that sales will be strong and it will give the company confidence to consider doing a First or Second Doctor series. But I'll settle for a cracking yarn from Andrew Cartmel and Christopher Jones, because that's what they're determined to give us!

CARTMEL on CARTMEL...

Which comics, comic writers or comic characters influenced the type of stories you commissioned for Doctor Who?

The writing of Alan Moore, who is the greatest writer ever to work in comics. Notably, although not exclusively, his work on Swamp Thing, Watchmen and Halo Jones. For Doctor Who specifically, Halo Jones was the most relevant and perhaps the most influential.

What were you able to do in your Doctor Who comic strips that you wouldn't have been able to do on television?

Great aliens, alien planets and space ships. Also, more hard-hitting and adult material.

Do you think a great comic writer necessarily makes a great television writer and vice versa?

Of course not. They are very different forms. When I was script editing Doctor Who I tried hard to get Alan Moore to write for the show – and he was interested and definitely keen, but just too busy to do anything for us. And I was both disappointed and relieved – relieved because what if it had gone horribly wrong?

Was there really a 'Cartmel Masterplan'?

I often say the masterplan was to get the scripts in on time. But actually, it was to restore the Doctor's mystery, power, autonomy and stature. It was never called that at the time, and it was never a formal thing – but it was an explicit and well-defined intention. And, by golly, we succeeded.

With thanks to John Freeman and Andrew Cartmel.

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2000AD FREE COMIC BOOK DAY

Every year, the first Saturday in May ushers forth the wonders of Free Comic Book Day. Whether you're visiting your local comic store in London or Los Angeles, you'll see displays of specially made comics just for FCBD; all free, all to be given away in a huge celebration of comic making.

2000AD have been making FCBD comics since 2011, and I'd go as far as saying it's their most important day of the entire comic year. Because although 2000AD is huge here in the UK, they've never really managed to make too many inroads into the USA. Everything is against them when you think about it; the weird size, the anthology format, the weekly frequency, and the distributors decision to offer the comic as a 4-Prog monthly pack to retailers. But on one day every year, a single issue of 2000AD goodness gets into the hands of US comic readers.

This is possibly one big reason why, over the last eight years, we've gone from something reprint heavy, to 2018's all-new, exclusive to FCBD 2000AD REGENED. If it wasn't free, we'd be describing it as a must buy! So join me as we take a little look through the best of the eight years of 2000AD's FCBD delights.

With a huge wealth of material to choose from, it's no surprise to find some very familiar names across the FCBD 2000ADs. When it comes to reprints, being able to list classic strips from Gerry Finlay-Day & Dave Gibbons (Rogue Trooper - 2011), Alan Moore & Steve Dillon (Ro-Busters - 2012), and Pat Mills & Kevin O'Neill (Nemesis -2015), to name but a few is a pretty great thing. But there's also a diverse array of more recent strips, often reprinting first episodes as hooks for readers and definitely giving a feel for the variety in today's 2000AD. But to my mind, the absolute highlights of 2000AD's FCBD comics have to be the willingness to include the more off-beat and out-there stuff.

Take the opener of 2011's FCBD, Kevin O'Neill doing his usual beautifully grotesque best on Tharg and the Intruder. Everyone's favourite alien editor takes a young fan of those other comics and who dares doubt the thrill-powered-ness of 2000AD for a terror filled tour. Then there's Chris Weston's wonderfully tongue in cheek Future Shock. Whatever happened to the Green Pedestrian Palm (2012). Or for peak weird, there's the welcome regular appearance (it's featured in 2011, 2012, and 2013) of Al Ewing and Henry Flint's Zombo. And whilst mentioning Henry Flint on Zombo, I have to point out that he's responsible for the three best FCBD covers; from 2013, 2014 and 2015.

And of course, seeing as this is 2000AD, there's always a good showing for a certain stony faced Judge. There's always been at least one original Dredd strip in each FCBD comic, but I'm particularly fond of 2015's In Through the Out Door, and it's all because of two bits of coffee-spluttering comedy dialogue from writer Matt Smith. As the residents of Bertrand Russell Block instigate a new social exclusion policy of one door for the exclusive residents and one for the plebs, tensions mount and boil over, all leading to this glorious moment and the beautifully tongue firmly in cheek line:

Finally, I couldn't leave without mentioning my two absolute favourites from the years of 2000AD's impressive FCBD comics. Both of which really deserve to be continued, but sadly, never have been, and both from 2015.

NO ONE'S FORCING US TO ENTER BERTRAND RUSSELL BY THE BACK DOOR!
CONTROL - DREDD. AERIAL UNITS REQUIRED PRONTO! OUTSIDE RUSSELL'S GETTING LIVELY.
ON THEIR WAY.
COME ON! IF THEY'RE GONNA TRY 'N KEEP US OUT, WE'LL SMASH OUR WAY IN!

Death Rock by Ben Willsher and Barry Krishna is a gloriously tantalising thing, beautifully revisiting a classic, as frontiersman Ajax Bloodthirsty investigates planet LV-42666's potential for colonisation but finds there's already a familiar face there. Hmmmm... Mysterious rock, danger, mystery, throwback time, yes, it's a sequel to the classic Harry Twenty on the High Rock by Gerry Finlay-Day and Alan Davis.

Dr Sin: Don't Call It A Comeback by Rob Williams and Luca Pizzari is all about bringing old skool horror to new skool hip hop. A rap star, the weird old geezer following him, the painting growing out of the chief whip's office in Westminster, and demonic events all over town, it's got so much potential! Williams did tell me that there had been brief talks to bring the strip back for a series, but nothing concrete as yet. A shame.

All of which brings us up to date, with 2018's new FCBD offering, the finest thus far. 2000AD REGENED is all-new, but more importantly, the editorial droids have taken the decision to reimagine 2000AD as an all-ages title. It's a perfect idea, and it absolutely works, with fabulous design, very modern stylised art and colours that scream of the now. There's even time for a few quiz and puzzle pages.

The fun begins with Matt Smith and Neil Googe giving us the adventures of Cadet Dredd, dealing with a raucous crowd at the Aeroball finals. Oh, and velociraptors. There's young Johnny Alpha on his trial mission in Strontium Dog: Trial Run by Alec Worley and Ben Willsher. Another cracking strip, with Willsher's art subtly changed to really pop as a kid's style strip, Ben10 rather than 2000AD. There's even a chance for a Future Shock, where Ned Hartley and Tanya Roberts give us Humancraft, a very Minecraft-y thing, asking "Are you a gamer or part of the game?"

And finally, magnificently, we have the return of those galactic teenage delinquents in DR & Quinch Hijack Free Comic Book Day from Owen Michael Johnson and Indio. The gags come thick and fast, the art is playful and the storyline is a fine bit of metafictional time-travelling weirdness, the one tale in here that definitely has a knowing nod to older 2000AD readers, whilst cleverly keeping it all very all-ages.

So, that's eight years of excellent 2000AD FCBD comics. What can we expect from next year? No clue yet, but I'm pretty sure they'll be looking to top 2018 over at Tharg's place. I imagine the script and art droids are being whipped into shape for that already.

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BATMAN

MASK OF THE PHANTASM AT TWENTY FIVE

The agonies of Warner Bros. executives trying to bring a live-action Batman to the big screen in a version that pleases at least some of the people some of the time deserve a little sympathy, but down the corridor in the offices of Warner Bros. Home Entertainment the picture is a bit different.

May 2018 brings the arrival of Batman Ninja, no less than the eighteenth in a sequence of animated Batman movies that kicked off in 2010, films which have rolled off the production line headed for the home viewing market at a healthy clip of two or three every year. Add in nearly as many animated Justice League movies over the same period—plus a few Lego Batman fandangos—and the character's presence in feature-length animation has sailed on unperturbed as a successful long-term project, even while the flesh-and-blood version has bounced stressfully from Christopher Nolan to Zack Snyder and currently out into limbo.

Batman Ninja is a full-scale anime, taking the character to medieval Japan and featuring designs by Takashi Okazaki, but the animated films have always embraced variety. Recent releases feature a version of the Elseworlds one-shot Gotham By Gaslight; two films adopting the visible-eyes costuming of the 1966 TV show with the voice of Adam West; and an adaptation of The Killing Joke in which writer Brian Azzarello expanded the arc of Batgirl in the story and incurred the vocal unhappiness of some fans of the character.

The original root of this thriving tree was the DC Animated Universe, a fourteen-year cycle of TV series, animated movies and spin-offs inaugurated in 1992 by Batman The Animated Series, all bearing the fingerprints of animator Bruce Timm, producer Eric Radomski, and writer Paul Dini. It was the DCAU that birthed the first full-length Batman animated movie, a film deemed worthy of a big-screen release once the studio saw what it had on its hands, and which celebrates its own 25th anniversary this year: Mask of the Phantasm.

The story goes that Phantasm was promoted from an intended destination on the small screen thanks to the strength of the title sequence alone. The opening is still an effective scene-setter: a sombre computer-assisted swoop around and through the Gotham City skyline, which might look vintage to modern CGI-jaded eyes but none the less takes the film noir atmosphere of the animated series and spices it with looming Art Deco mystery. The titles also foreground the contribution of composer Shirley Walker, just as much of a performer in Phantasm as any of the voice actors, who opens the film with a dark operatic hymn. Walker had already designed a distinctive musical identity for the animated series by borrowing Danny Elfman's themes from two Tim Burton films, but for Phantasm the score is grander, mythic and melodramatic—and partly performed by Hans Zimmer. The end credits reveal the presence of Zimmer on synthesizers, more than a decade before his own booming musical style was hardwired into Christopher Nolan's Dark Knight films.

Phantasm's story is relatively modest. The animated TV show was still in its early stages after all, with some of its grander flights of baroque fancy still to come in later seasons. But Phantasm's deceptively narrow narrative focuses on Bruce Wayne rather more than his alter ego, and elegantly skirts around the restriction imposed on writers of The Animated Series that they should steer clear of Batman's origin. Phantasm bends this rule, to accommodate flashbacks of Wayne's first nighttime misadventures in balaclava and combat trousers, and to insert a past romance with a woman named Andrea Beaumont. The Joker is involved, but kept on the sidelines until the halfway point in favour of the Phantasm, a fresh villain with a vendetta against Gotham's mob bosses. Wayne, smitten with Beaumont, is tempted to renounce his secret life, but forced back to it—or rescued from giving it up—by the sins and sacrifices of others. All this ground is covered in 76 minutes of brisk 2D cartoon storytelling.

Not that this made it a hit. Box-office takings of $5.6 million failed to cover the $6 million the film cost to make, and fingers were pointed at the marketing department, given the studio's relative unfamiliarity with animated movies at the time. The animation has some rough edges too, thanks to a finite budget and available technology. Even that opening sequence, responsible for a big-screen release in the first place, makes an uncomfortable jag straight through a ceiling, the virtual camera breaking its own rules.

Its flaws don't matter. Mask of the Phantasm flies on its leather wings, as lean as any classic Denny O'Neil/Neal Adams comic, and like them it understands the place of melodrama in a Batman story. The gothic mood crests at the point an adult Bruce Wayne convulses tearfully at his parents' graveside, agonised at the thought he might be content enough with life to leave Batman behind, while Walker's score seethes with dire religiosity, fate peering over Bruce's shoulders. It's strong stuff, deeply understanding of the character's roots in male powerlessness, and as poignant as anything a live-action Batman film has yet made of the younger Bruce entering his personal purgatory while wandering down Crime Alley.

Mask of the Phantasm is a period piece now, a quarter-century out of step with current animation styles, as well as with today's habitual splicing of different genres and compulsory irony. But it understands Batman very well, and knows his place in his own city. It knows that when Andrea Beaumont cautiously turns on a table lamp in her pitch black nighttime apartment, the animated frame will snap from black to white and Batman will be revealed where he has been all along, closer than a flesh and blood actor could hide without giving an audience the giggles, roughly six inches from her face. Right where he should be.

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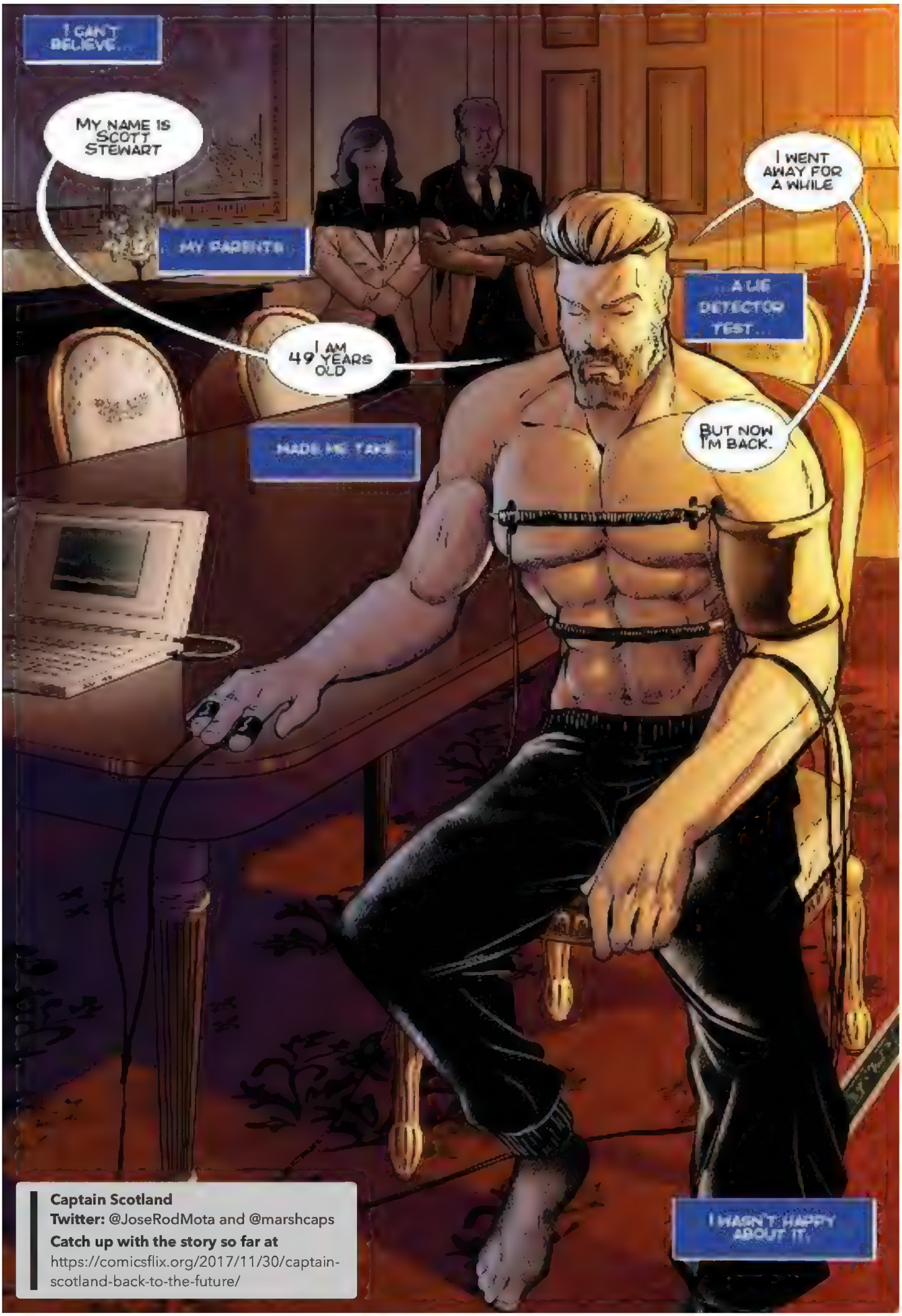
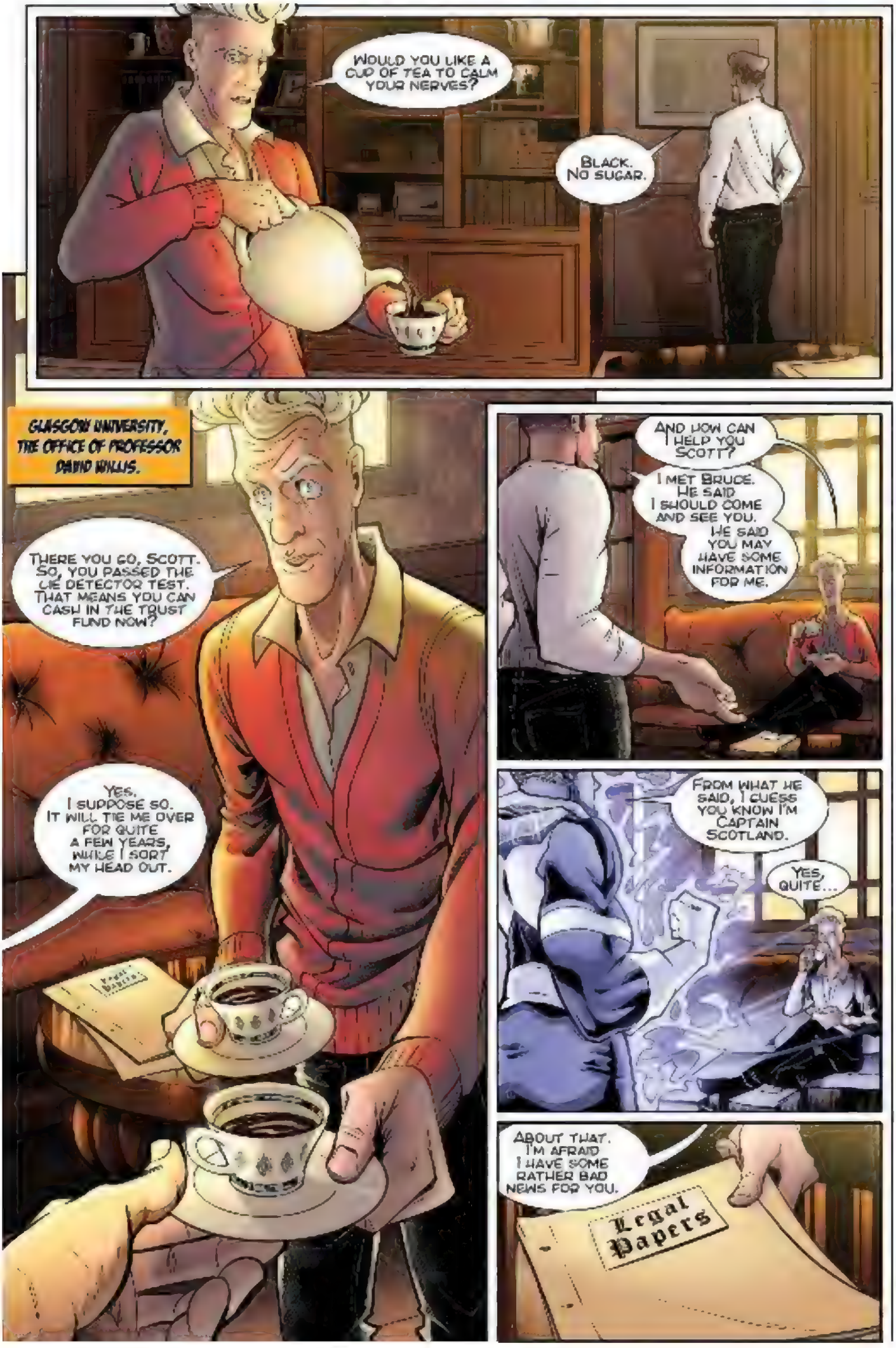

I CAN'T BELIEVE...
MY NAME IS SCOTT STEWART
MY PARENTS
I AM 49 YEARS OLD
MADE ME TAKE...
I WENT AWAY FOR A WHILE
A LIE DETECTOR TEST...
BUT NOW I'M BACK.
I WASN'T HAPPY ABOUT IT.

Captain Scotland
Twitter: @JoseRodMota and @marshcaps
Catch up with the story so far at
https://comicsflix.org/2017/11/30/captain-scotland-back-to-the-future/


WOULD YOU LIKE A CUP OF TEA TO CALM YOUR NERVES?
BLACK. NO SUGAR.
GLASGOW UNIVERSITY, THE OFFICE OF PROFESSOR DAVID WILLIS.
THERE YOU GO, SCOTT. SO, YOU PASSED THE LIE DETECTOR TEST. THAT MEANS YOU CAN CASH IN THE TRUST FUND NOW?
YES. I SUPPOSE SO. IT WILL TIE ME OVER FOR QUITE A FEW YEARS, WHILE I SORT MY HEAD OUT.
AND HOW CAN I HELP YOU SCOTT?
I MET BRUCE. HE SAID I SHOULD COME AND SEE YOU. HE SAID YOU MAY HAVE SOME INFORMATION FOR ME.
FROM WHAT HE SAID, I GUESS YOU KNOW I'M CAPTAIN SCOTLAND.
YES, QUITE...
ABOUT THAT. I'M AFRAID I HAVE SOME RATHER BAD NEWS FOR YOU.
Legal Papers

THESE ARE LEGAL PAPERS REQUESTING YOU TO CEASE AND DESIST USING THE NAME OR APPEARING AS CAPTAIN SCOTLAND, WITH A FURTHER NON DISCLOSURE AGREEMENT ABOUT NOT DISCUSSING THIS ISSUE WITH ANYONE ELSE.
WHAT...I... I DON'T UNDERSTAND
...I...I...DON'T KNOW WHAT TO SAY.
THIS ISN'T WHAT I EXPECTED. WHAT'S THIS ALL ABOUT?
WE WILL, OF COURSE, DIRECT YOUR TALENTS ELSEWHERE - FOR WHICH YOU WILL BE HANDSOMELY COMPENSATED.
I WILL NEED YOU TO SIGN THESE, IN BLUE INK. I HAVE A PEN.
YOU MAY RECALL THERE WERE A NUMBER OF STUDENTS WITH YOU ON ARTHUR'S SEAT WHEN YOU DEVELOPED YOUR POWERS
AS YOU KNOW THOSE POWERS CHANNELLED THROUGH YOU FROM THE EARTHS CORE.
THE LIGHTNING WAS FOR, AH, DRAMATIC EFFECT.
THOSE WITH YOU, PARTAKING IN THE MAY DAY HONOURED TRADITIONS, WERE SIMILARLY AFFECTED.
BUT NOT IN THE DIRECT WAY YOU WERE. MORE TEA?
NO, NO, I'M FINE.
THEIR CHILDREN, YOU SEE. THEY CHILDREN DEVELOPED POWERS. NOT ALL AS WELL ROUNDED AS YOUR OWN, BUT POWERS ALL THE SAME.
I'VE BEEN RESEARCHING THIS FOR A WHILE. THE BODILY INCURSION OF THE MOST PARENTS WAS ABOUT FIFTEEN YEARS. THOSE WHO HAD CHILDREN IN THEIR MID TEENS ETC.
WELL, ALL OF THEM I WAS CHILDREN WITH POWERS THAT DEVELOPED IN THEIR TEENS.
I'VE BEEN NURTURING THEM, BUT ALL ARE EAGER AND READY TO LEARN FROM YOU, SCOTT.
HOWEVER, ONE OF THEM DEVELOPED MORE THAN EXPECTED.
WE DIDN'T KNOW YOU WOULD BE COMING BACK, SCOTT AND, WELL, THERE WAS A VACANCY.
THEY WERE VERY ADAMANT ON CONTROLLING HER IMAGE FOR MERCHANDISING.
I'M SO SORRY TO BREAK THE NEWS TO YOU, BUT IT'S ALREADY BEEN DECIDED...

PLEASE MEET THE NEW CAPTAIN SCOTLAND...
ALRIGHT, OLD MAN...

CAPTAIN SCOTLAND

DEJA WHO ? BY JIM WILKINS

Through the Looking Glass

Exploring **Scotland's influence on comic books**, where the weather is perfect for writing and drawing indoors!

Toxic! The Secret History Part One

It was all Margaret Thatcher's fault... No really, it was!

How did so many of 2000AD's stalwarts get together to be part of a rival publication? And why, ultimately, in spite of the incredible talent on board, did it not succeed?

In 1986 Margaret Thatcher was at the end of a second term as the first female PM in UK history. In Leicester, convinced that the UK was ripe for young entrepreneurs to make" loadsa money" very quickly, Geoff Fry set up Neptune Distribution to challenge Titan's virtual monopoly of US comics distribution in the UK. (I once asked the Monopolies Commission about them, but they weren't interested. As my friend said at the time, "The problem with the Monopolies Commission is that there's only one of them.")

The shop that I co-owned with Pete Root and Bob Napier, aka books and comics [ee cummings has no monopoly on lower case], had quickly grown to become the largest in Glasgow, but Titan's performance was not always first rate, although we did like the folks who worked there. Pete Root's main love was American back issues and so it was that we would attend the occasional comic mart in England. Pete and I were at the Manchester Comic Mart one day and Geoff sought us out there and told us about his plans and we said that, of course, we would listen to him. Geoff had been speaking to as many independent dealers as he could to build up business. But even at this first meeting he seemed to have some special plans for us.

We started by giving him a little of our comics order, but when Forbidden Planet – owned by the Titan people – suddenly opened in Glasgow, without the common courtesy of informing us, we decided to give Geoff most of our business. Loads of other comic shops followed and Geoff's turnover went from tens of thousands to, he said,

a seven figure sum. Pretty impressive in such a short time.

It is, however, always worth placing in a prominent part of your office a sign with these wise words: Turnover is vanity, Profit is sanity. Geoff then decided that, like Titan, he could become a publisher. He bought Fantasy Advertiser, at the time the leading UK comics magazine, and employed its editor, the always pleasant Martin Skidmore, to continue to edit the magazine and work on a new comics anthology which would eventually be called Trident. (Titan, Neptune, Trident. I wonder if Geoff knew enough about Classical Literature to realise that hubris is always followed by nemesis?)

Martin was a real comics enthusiast. We knew him from the famous Westminster Comic Marts and the compulsory drinks in the Westminster Arms after the mart. We all used to meet there with Kev O'Neill, Mick McMahon, Dave Gibbons, Alan Moore and the like and compare that day's purchases and catch up on news. It was these meetings in the Westminster Arms which ensured that aka got so many brilliant signing sessions. Martin and I were certainly well connected.

Probably no surprise, then, that leading on from a discussion in a London bar near where UKCAC was being held, I was working on publishing The Bogie Man. My friend George Jackson, co-founder of the band Ossian had just returned from a successful tour in Europe and America and had set up Iona Records, a fabulous alternative shop in Glasgow. George thought we should be publishing something and in the bar that day with Robin Smith, John Wagner, and Alan Grant we all agreed to do just that. A few months later, in 1989, The Bogie Man #1 hit the shelves in WH Smith, John Menzies, and comics shops throughout the UK. It sold very well at first but for various reasons (we had to sue the Mirror Group, owned at the time by the lovely Robert Maxwell, who also owned, eh, 2000AD!) our publishing company Fat Man Press ran into difficulties.

'Controversial' St Swithin's Day.

One day, Geoff phoned me at aka to ask me to hire a venue in Glasgow and invite as many Scottish creators as I could. My friend Alan owned Blackfriars Bar and he gave me the downstairs space. Along came Grant Morrison, Mark Millar and others and Geoff told them about his plans for a new comics publishing company called Trident. Would I fly down to Leicester to talk to him and Martin? Why not?

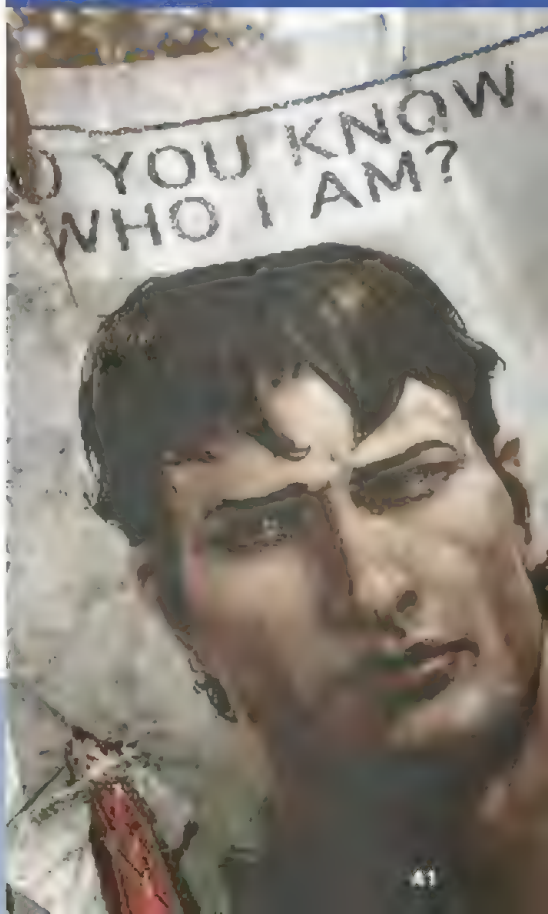
Geoff wanted to install me as "Publisher" of Trident and to work with Martin. I didn't like (or use in public) the term "Publisher" – it was Martin's baby as far as I was concerned, but we did put out some fabulous comics. Mark Millar was particularly enthusiastic and soon produced the scripts for Saviour (art by Danny Vallely and then Nigel Kitching) with Jonathan Ross as the title character years before Mark's suggestion that Samuel L. Jackson should be the new Nick Fury and The Shadowmen (art by Andy Hope). Grant Morrison wrote St Swithin's Day and it appeared in Trident #1 with wonderful art by Paul Grist. Man Elf (by Michael Moorcock – no less! – Guy Lawley and Richard Weston), Burglar Bill (Paul Grist again), Lucifer (Eddie Campbell and Phil Elliot)...

Then there was a colour reprint of the whole St Swithin's Day. We made sure one of Margaret Thatcher's loyal sycophants, Teddy Taylor, who was representing Cathcart in Glasgow, got to know about it and he was outraged! He ranted in the Daily Mail (now, there's a surprise) about the insult to our beloved PM. Of course, with such free publicity, we sold out in two or three days and I think we immediately went to reprint. No use paying for an advert when coverage like that costs nothing.

But Geoff actually wanted me attached to his company for another reason. Martin and I had put together these great wee comics and our experiment with full colour had been a sell-out. But Geoff, like John Paul Getty in the recent film, wanted more.

(Part 2 next issue).

The Second Coming - Savior.



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That Whooshing Noise: 30 Years of Deadline

Thirty years ago, at the peak of the Second Summer of Love, Acid House was everywhere, and in the febrile atmosphere where anything seemed possible two comic artists set out an audacious plan.

Established 2000 AD regulars Brett Ewins and Steve Dillon were becoming increasingly frustrated with the lack of creator rights at the British sci-fi comic and so laid out a vision to publish their own comics anthology. "Deadline was the mass market pop comic that we wanted," Ewins recounted on the BBC's Comics Britannia in 2007, "as well as a cross between journalism and comics."

The pair initially took their Deadline proposal to Titan and had an offer to finance it for the direct sales market (comic shops) as a quarterly. "Titan already had their own idea of a fully formed magazine with Brett and Steve as editors–who had a business plan of their own on the back of a fag packet," remembered Tom Astor, the magazine's ultimate publisher. "But they came to me in a bid to maintain more independence…and I was assured that it would all be self-financing very quickly [laughs]." Brett had been friends with record producer Astor (Nancy's grandson) for years, and the merging of music and comics felt like a perfect fit.

In their hunt for contributors Ewins was invited down to Worthing Art College where his fellow Goldsmiths graduate Julie Westbury was lecturing. Studying there were Jamie Hewlett, Philip Bond and Alan Martin, who'd self-published two issues of their own fanzine, Atomtan.

"I always liken myself to the Bez of the outfit," joked Tank Girl's co-creator and writer Martin, "Keeping the vibe going, rolling whatever needed to rolled, making the tea and throwing ideas into the pot, but I didn't have the comic drawing chops to do what Jamie and Phil were doing. On Atomtan #2 I did a lot more, but on #1 I did a couple of pages and helped collage the original Tank Girl page. I spent time selling it to people in college, sneaking in to get it photocopied, etc. When Brett turned up Jamie and Philip mobbed him–if two people can mob one person–and he was bowled over by their artwork."

The creative roster grew to include Shaky Kane (the love child of Savage Pencil and Jack Kirby) and Steve's younger brother Glyn. "I also loved the weird shit you'd find elsewhere throughout the mag," said another contributor, Nick Abadzis. "The more offbeat stuff like Rachael Ball, D'Israeli, Glenn Dakin, Carol Swain, and weird, goofy essays by people Brett happened to encounter and commission. As founders of Deadline, [Brett and Steve] gave a lot of room and support to people who might not otherwise have had such an ideal launch pad."

"It all felt it had come from the same place," explained Martin. "The same gang and vibe was behind it…the stories had the same spirit. That feeling of 'coming home' and 'finding your people' 'Ah, these are the guys do what I like and understand me!'"

The magazine was launched at the UK Comic Art Convention (UKCAC) in September. Journalist and broadcaster Andrew Collins remembered, "Deadline arriving in 1988 was like 2000 AD arriving in 1977. It arrived bang in the middle of a new musical and cultural era."

"The first flowering of Deadline was extraordinary because it was so completely unexpected," recounted former Deadline editor Frank Wynne. "There wasn't a single strip in there which made you go, 'I've seen something like this before.'"

"It think too often people are quick to point to Jamie & Alan's Tank Girl, but I think Philip Bond's Wired World played a massive part. It was a double-punch with those two strips. These two girls, the relationship they had, the life they led, going to the laundry, etc. That aspect was probably more influential than Tank Girl in a way, which was the immediate hit," said Dave Eliot, who took over editing the magazine.

"One day [Tom Astor] reached out to me and said that Brett and Steve were juggling too much and would I come in and help." So I went into the office and Steve and Brett were like a couple of soldiers who'd seen too much battle! Clearly neither of them wanted to let go, but both were working on Skreemer [with writer Peter Milligan for DC Comics] at the time and it was just too much." Dillon confirmed this in a 2011 interview with Tripwire, "Doing Deadline was just exhausting. Neither me nor Brett were experienced editors. We got people in to help design-wise [including Ra Khan and DC Comics' current Art Director Steve Cook], and to help with advertising, but you still ended up doing a lot yourself. I'd end up marking up pages on the Tube on the way to the printers."

So Elliot took over the editorship around 1990. "At that stage it was

Deadline Gang

only selling 12,000-14,000 copies an issue, so first priority was to get sales up. At the time the only advertisers were Betty Boo and the like that were either given away or traded and they were only really making money on the small adverts that cost around £100. So I suggested broadening the content out a bit and brought in Evan Dorkin's Milk & Cheese and Bob Burden's Flaming Carrot strips. Bob told me in the period that the strip was in Deadline, UK sales of his comic more than tripled, and for a year he was selling more T-shirts in the UK than he was in the whole of the North America."

Music was intertwined from the very start with the magazine. "Deadline did do a lot of stuff that has since been credited with happening elsewhere first, perhaps because it really did have a pop culture sensibility that was very of-the-moment, very self-aware but also sort of transitory," said Eisner Award winner Abadzis. "It gave readers the same kind of hit they'd get from a pop song. Great pop stays with you, but it's also momentary. It feels like it means something, and the memories of those intense kinds of emotions stay with you."

"A lot of bands were into comics and a lot of comic creators were into bands and that was expressed best through Deadline," revealed Cud bassist and artist, William Potter. "In the early days, after leaving art college, I was split wondering if Cud were going to go anywhere or whether I was going to be a comic artist, which was my dream. It turned out that being involved with comics benefitted Cud and vice versa. Because I met Phil and Jamie at a signing in a Leeds comic shop and they confessed to being Cud fans, so I got in with the Deadline crew. So we were invited to play at Deadline's first birthday party. As a result I managed to show my work to Brett Ewins who was very helpful…So Cud got me in the door with my first strip in Deadline."

The magazine had Martin and Hewlett do one of the very first interviews with Blur in 1992, which would lead to a lifelong friendship and collaborative partnership. Bands like The Senseless Things and The Inspiral Carpets were featured on the covers. "We did a range of T-shirts of bands on the cover of the magazine, " Astor recalled. "I think the first was Carter USM [Oct '91 #34 drawn by Bond] and it was something like the No.1 selling T-shirt in HMV that week so we thought we were onto something and so did a series of them, with the bands thinking it was cool they were drawn as cartoon characters."

Ironically, deadlines became an issue with creators as Dillon remembered in Tripwire, "I loved the lads but they did have a habit of bringing it in on print day, right up to the wire."

"We were always late, and any other editor would've given us hell, but they used to laugh, shrug and take

us down the pub," Martin confirmed. "So we'd turn up at 10am at the Deadline offices having caught the milk train from Worthing with a pile of Tank Girl artwork under our arms just in time to catch the printers, so there was no time for Brett and Steve to read the strip let alone edit it, and by lunchtime we'd all be down the pub. And we did it every time! Jamie knew he could turn it around. He had much more stamina than me and could stay up all night and I would flake out at 4am, fall asleep in Jamie's bed, wake up three hours later and he'd still be there going 'we need script in this panel!'"

And things didn't get any better under Elliot's tenure: "In the last weekend of the month, before the deadline, I started going down to Worthing and I'd crash at Jamie's house and the night before I'd have return to London everyone would draw all night to finish the work so I could bring it back with me for that issue. I was really a lot of fun. There'd be a massive piss-up drinking all weekend, having a laugh and picnics, and then on the last night we'd get down to work. There were a few Tank Girl strips I was inking backgrounds for. It was a real fun time. Nick Abadzis would come down and finish Hugo Tate when we were down there. On Monday morning heading back to London with a hangover, but knowing that I had the issue completed in my portfolio."

Things had improved a little under Wynne's regime, "The Worthing crew always worked to the last minute. I tried to get them to work on time but we never had to bus someone down there to collect the work."

Hugo Tate creator Nick Abadzis believes the magazine's success was down to the fact that "It captured the zeitgeist. It made individuals famous, but it became better known in a short time than such a small mag had any right to be. The cultural impact was huge and vital, and that was its collective achievement. That you could open Deadline's pages and it seemed relevant to NOW, and was made with a lot of ambition, love, snot and youthful zeal and energy."

"Culturally there was no magazine as influential at that period, including Face and iD." Said Wynne.

"We stood for something…Creator rights and creative freedom, and considering the rates were only about £50 a page the rights were justly owned by the creators," said Elliot, who handed the reigns over to writer/editor Si Spencer.

> Martin & Hewlett did one of the very first interviews with Blur, which would lead to a lifelong friendship & collaborative partnership.

Twice nominated for the International Man Booker Prize, translator and editor Frank Wynne then took over from Spencer, "If the original Deadline under Brett and Steve was a small child with ADHD making poop jokes and racing around, causing havoc, then Deadline under Si Spencer was the boozy, druggy middle years of gigs and sex. Under me, Deadline was an experiment to see what happens if it does some things that are a little more serious than that."

Beset by perennial cash flow issues, and a Tank Girl film that ironically tanked, Deadline finally called last orders in October 1995, after seven years and 71 issues. "It was difficult for me carrying all these hopes and aspirations," Astor revealed. "And I carried on thinking that maybe the Tank Girl film and magazine would be a massive success and when they weren't that's when Deadline stopped when it did."

Sadly Brett Ewins passed away in 2015 and Steve Dillon died the following year–both tragically in their 50s– but not before going on to produce cult comics like Ewins' The Dark Gate and Dillon's Hellblazer and Preacher with Garth Ennis. And their vision and legacy continue to mould popular culture today.

"What Brett and Steve did has fed into culture in an understated way. Deadline was a cultural phenomenon and those ripples are everywhere," said Martin. "And there are small echoes of it." Those echoes can be seen in the many successful careers it helped launch, including Glyn Dillon creating the award-winning graphic novel The Nao of Brown and becoming a key visualiser for the Star Wars film franchises. Jamie Hewlett teamed up with Blur's Damon Albarn to create Gorillaz. Philip Bond continues having a successful career in US comics with Black Crown. Even members of Deadline's Ad sales team went on to head up Ridley Scott's production company and another, Jason Iley, is now the CEO and Chairman of Sony Music UK.

And those ripples through culture continue right up to today. A new magazine, Missed Deadline, is due to launch in August 2018 featuring the same mix of music, articles and comics. While "hugely influenced" by the original magazine this new quarterly is carving its own path, led by Publisher Jessica Kemp, but with some familiar crew members on board, including Deadline's former editor Dave Elliot. As Nick Abadzis saliently put it, "The time is always right for a new revolutionary magazine."

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A BEGINNERS GUIDE TO TANK GIRL

ANARCHY UNLEASHED

With the end of the 80s, independent comic publishers were emerging that nurtured new talent and challenged the popularity of the established names. Britain had its wealth of creators on 2000AD, but many more were emerging with energy and anarchy, avoiding both conventional stories and creating characters who were raw and unpredictable.

Tank Girl has long been one of comic's most iconic creations. Created by Jamie Hewlett and Alan Martin and published in Deadline magazine, the cult classic title about a girl and her tank surviving in a punk, post-apocalyptic world was first published in 1988 and is still going strong 30 years later.

Martin and Hewlett were art college students who had worked on comic fanzines at school. Their passion for mass-media publications gave birth to one of Deadline's most memorable characters. Tank Girl was a new breed of savvy punk anti-heroines full of attitude, beer and a mouth full of expletives.

The creators seemed to spark off each other, feeding their own unique tastes and passions, reflecting their film and TV viewing habits, their tastes in music and their shared upbringing as kids of the 70's. When I opened Tank Girl for the first time it was if I had been invited to step through a distorted looking glass and found talking Kangaroos instead of Cheshire Cats.

Tank Girl's world is one of booze, breasts and massive explosions all blended together and scattered across the pages. The obsession with war films introduced the tank element, the distinctive skinhead hairstyle came from cinematic greats like Love and Rockets. Having the action centred in Australia from cult classics such as Crocodile Dundee and Mad Max. As I explored the world of Tank Girl, I found a wealth of cultural references taken from TV, film or song lyrics. There's acknowledgements to their own personal heroes and villains scribbled on walls or at times below the panels as footnotes.

Tank Girl is a heady cocktail of blended pop culture passions with a sharp edge of cynical street-smart dialogue and graffiti-style art and all presented with in your face humour. Here's a run-down of the Tank girl collected comics that should interest the beginner to the series

Tank Girl – Vol #1 and Vol #2

Titan comics have collected the initial strips from the early Deadline days in chronological order in these accessible volumes. Volume #1 features the early black and white stories, packed with anarchic irreverence. These are generally stand-alone stories, self-contained and growing in confidence.

Her first solo story introduces us to our antiheroine and establishes exactly what kind of world she lives in. In this

story, Tank Girl is chasing a bounty on a biker gang of sentient mutant kangaroos. She literally crashes her tank into a part that the gang had metaphorically crashed earlier, killing not only the gang members but the party goers as well. The leader makes a run for it with Tank Girl in pursuit, the two collapse exhausted near a high rock formation and proceed to have sex.

That's the kind of initial story which makes an impression. The whole strip is written in the style of a comedy adventure in a classic kids comic. Only it's about reckless violence and inter species fucking and the chaotic intensity increases through the first volume with various narratives asking Tank Girl to deliver a colostomy bag to the president and delivering religious missionaries to a Christmas party where she encounters the second coming of the baby Jesus and wishes she could get him drunk. It's all glorious in the laugh out loud nature, I found myself turning pages hooked on never being able to anticipate where the story is going to go next.

As this magazine goes to print it's been confirmed by Titan that they are going to release the first volume in full colour under the banner of Tank Girl: Full Colour Classics – due to be released at the 18th of April. These have been coloured by Tracy Bailey and Sofie Dodgson and bring a new vibrancy to the world of Tank Girl. These new colours are a fantastic way to celebrate 30 years of Tank Girl and I will certainly be ordering them once released!

Volume two finds the action moving away from Australia and to Britain, the journeys become more surreal and fantastical. The strips explode into dazzling colour and it takes on a psychedelic character. There's a greater sense of experimentation with the strips presentation as well, there's disjointed panels which break down any narrative conventions. There's an injection of rambling thoughts into the narrative which almost seem to abandon any notion of a coherent story.

This volume has less of an emphasis on big explosions, it's shaped more by an obsession with sex, drugs and personal experience which culminates in the Summer Love Sensation storyline. There's the homages to pop 70's culture with appearances by Jimi Hendrix, Starsky and Hutch (which is lampooned in a strip called 'Askey and Hunch) and even the creators make an appearance – almost blurring their world with the world of their creation Tank Girl herself.

Serious Issues

Aside from the sheer fun that underlies Tank Girl's antics, there are running themes which are subtly woven through the seemingly disjointed narrative which Hewlett and Martin deliver so expertly in these early issues. There's the obvious punk rebelliousness which hits you in the face, also the nature of sexual agency and exploitation which are explored in particularly subversive ways.

One narrative deals with an army officer who has been sent to assassinate Tank Girl, but he is having vivid nightmares about being killed by her breasts. He visualises them turning into massive missiles. This arc deals with patriarchal institutions and breast obsession with female heroes in comic book. It's brilliant and subversive and features one of the many aspects that Tank Girl revolves around.

There's a great number of moments in Tank Girl's myriad of narratives which female nudity is featured in a manner which is neither sexual or sexy. Tank Girl counters the argument that when we see a naked female in comics that we immediately must find her sexually attractive. Tank Girl's visual aesthetic features her as often dirty, sweaty and bald. She isn't the traditionally attractive female protagonist. She is generally portrayed as a sexy character, but it's a real, raw kind of sexiness, not an idealised male portrayal of female sexuality.

This dynamic continues through the series, with the present-day incarnations of Tank Girl and her friends, unashamedly embracing their sexuality and their bodies. Tank Girl's romantic interest in her boyfriend Booga – a talking mutant Kangaroo is often used to represent the struggles of interracial couples in the western world. Booga often is portrayed as a metaphor for Aboriginal Australian or African immigrants in the U.K. This enduring relationship serves to normalise real-life interracial and intercultural relationships.

Over the years, Tank Girl has expanded into a fantastically deep and complex title. There's a mixture of the absurd and the subtle sublime political statements which pepper the dialogue and artwork. Tank Girl has remained a strong and unique title due to its chaotic exuberance which the protagonists character fully embraces. It is a cult title, but it's one with a lasting influence, characters ranging from Harley Quinn to Furiosa often seem to have at least some subtle nods to Tank Girl.

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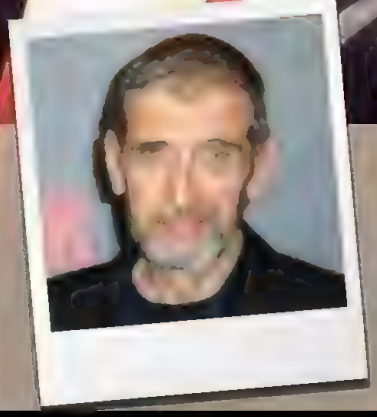

Remembering Steve Dillon

Steve Dillon was a British comic artist whose career spanned a number of decades. He worked for 2000AD, ran the influential UK music and comics magazine Deadline, which featured Tank Girl, with Bret Ewins and was the co-creator of Vertigo's Preacher with Garth Ennis.

He died suddenly in October 2016 at the age of 54 in New York.

Dillon began his career drawing for Hulk Weekly for Marvel UK 40 years ago.

Comics was in his blood from a very young age. He told me in an interview I did with him back in 2011 how he made comics when he was still in school:

"Me and a friend decided to get together and do some comics, because his dad happened to have a photocopier in his office and they were quite rare things in those days. So we just sold them to our school pals for 10p a shot. I did things like Planet of The Apes adaptions from the novels and then we tried to do some original science fiction stories. And that's how I started off really."

He recalled how he got his first professional work in the same chat we had:

"My first proper comic job was a three-page strip for Hulk Weekly. It was a whole strip, a tryout job. Dez [Skinn] liked it and offered me the job. It was written by Steve Parkhouse if my memory serves. It had nine panels a page. Dez's idea was to do the American Marvel characters in a British style to make it look more like British comics."

He met Ewins just from being located in London, he remembered: "I met Bret Ewins when I was living in London. Comics shops like Dark They Were and the first Forbidden Planet had opened and you had places to gather. There was also the Westminster Comic Mart. That's where I met people like Dave Gibbons, Brian Bolland, Mick McMahon. I probably bumped into people like Bret and Brendan [McCarthy] there as well. So it was just through mutual friends that you ended up meeting people."

Deadline was a major part of his career and it was a high watermark for him in comics even though towards the end, he wasn't as involved as he was from the start: "Jamie Hewlett was doing lovely work, as was Phil Bond. I'm also really proud of Nick Abadzis's Hugo Tate. There was lots of good stuff in Deadline and it's great to see that a lot of these guys

went on from there and made decent careers. I wasn't at the helm for the last bit of it because I had to go to Dublin, where I was a consultant. I was still a director of the company. I saw stuff on fax and all that sort of thing. But in the end Brett was there on his own really with a couple of staff. It got a bit much for him as well. Tom Astor, the guy who financed it, stayed involved but we got people like Si Spencer and Dave Elliott in for a bit to edit."

It is arguably Preacher where he got noticed by US fans even though he spent a number of years on Vertigo's Hellblazer. The genesis of that was fairly smooth, Dillon informed me: "It was in the early days of Vertigo so you felt like you still needed some sort of fantasy element to any series you created for them. Vertigo, as it turned out, moved on from that. But at the time, we thought 'Okay it needs to have angels and demons. Vampires.' It still worked out perfectly and I don't think we'd have changed it even if we didn't have to put the fantasy in it. Garth lived in Belfast at the time and I lived in Dublin so we used to meet up occasionally. I'd go up there or he'd come down to see me in Dublin. We'd have a few beers and stay over at each other's places, talk nonsense and ideas came out of that."

He felt that he did have a bit of a charmed career, he told me in that conversation back in 2011:

"When I was a teenager, I didn't think I'd be alive at this age let alone still be drawing comics. Life leads you down certain paths. When I was at school and I chose what I was going to do for my O Levels, it was with the plan of going to university to do physics. And it was only when I was doing my O Levels that I decided: 'I'd much rather draw. And I'd much rather draw than do Physics'. As much as I love Physics…And then you meet your missus, and you have kids. Your priorities change and you want regular work. I couldn't do experiments like Deadline now. Admittedly, I did it when I had kids but I had the attitude that, if it succeeded, I could get a regular wage and have evenings and weekends off. I thought I'd be able to do it in a normal office job and then do a few hours freelancing into the evening. I now know better really. When you've got three kids, you need regular work."

But his legacy lives on. This year will see the third season of Preacher on AMC and it is now an established part of the TV schedule. Also, Luton, the place he made his home for many years, has named two streets in honour of him: Preacher Close and Cassidy Close. Last year, Michael Molcher and Tim Pilcher put together a tribute sketchbook too which was sold at New York Comic Con and MCM London with a stellar line-up of artists including Bill Sienkiewicz, Chris Weston, Rafael Albuquerque and Sean Phillips.

Dillon was one of the finest UK comic artists of his generation and he may be gone but he certainly isn't forgotten. Let's raise a pint of Guinness to this true original.

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"I wasn't surprised by the book's success," says Alan Grant of Judgement on Gotham, the original Batman / Judge Dredd team-up from 1991. A huge commercial hit, it was arguably the most successful appearance the future lawman ever made in America in his purest form, the watered-down film versions notwithstanding.

Batman and Dredd are both idols with their respective fans, and I figured both sets of readers would pick up on the team-up," continues Grant, "and the fact the artwork was by Simon Bisley just made that more likely. I'd point out that after a first issue, sales would generally fall quite far and quite fast. When Simon did the first Lobo mini-series (with Grant and writer Keith Giffen for DC), sales actually went up by around 50,000 for issue two. That was an unheard of state of affairs, which just emphasised his popularity with the readers."

At the time, everything was lined up perfectly. Grant was one of the key writers on DC's Batman titles, his long-time 2000AD writing partner (and Dredd's co-creator) John Wagner had the reins on Dredd, and Simon Bisley's just-finished run of visceral painted art on Slaine: The Horned God had turned him into the hottest and most influential British comic artist of the '90s. Yet easy synchronicity like this glosses over the fact it had taken a couple of false starts for the story to come to fruition.

"As far as I recall, it was the powers-that-be at (then-2000AD publisher) Fleetway who actually made the suggestion (of putting Dredd and Batman together)," says Grant. "It made a lot of sense, so Fleetway spoke directly to DC and everybody agreed." In fact, Grant has said that the suggestion was originally made some years before Tim Burton's 1989 Batman film gave the Caped Crusader a huge shot of publicity, and DC desperately agreed in the hope that any gimmick would boost Batman's flagging sales.

The first idea, apparently, was to give the project to Alan Moore and Brian Bolland, but despite Bolland's reputa-

tion as one of the classic Dredd artists, Wagner and Grant – then Dredd's well-entrenched writing partnership – made it known they weren't happy with their character being passed to another writer. Instead, Moore and Bolland created Batman: The Killing Joke, which was released in 1988 and became a huge and enduring success.

Next, artists Alan Davis and Paul Neary were approached, but the money on offer wasn't enough for them to turn down becoming the artists on Marvel's new British-set X-book Excalibur; although Davis did illustrate a kind of trial run for a Batman/Dredd team-up, when Wagner wrote the visually similar Dredd one-off 'Bat Mugger' for him in 1988's 2000AD prog 585, the artist's last work for 2000AD.

In the end, the final shape of Judgement on Gotham was partly down to Wagner eventually agreeing to do it when he did. No fan of superheroes, he had originally been cold on the idea, but his definitive take on Dredd and Grant's deep understanding of Batman (and Judge Anderson, the Mega-City Psi-Judge who played mediator to the two men of violence) created a perfect balance.

The story also set the trio up against Dredd's principal Rogue's Gallery members, the other-dimensional mass-killer Judge Death and the dim-witted but hyper-violent cyborg Mean Machine Angel, with Batman's enemy Scarecrow drafted in as a fearsome foil for Death. As Grant told Peter Sanderson for Comics Alliance at the time, the treatment which he and Wagner originally had accepted was a serious and straightforward horror idea; but when they came to write it, they junked their first plan with the new brief, "let's see if we can come up with something that makes us happy while we're writing it, that gives us a laugh."

Bisley's painted work was a revelation, marrying a clear understanding of the characters looks and personalities with a taste for punkish, heavy metal violence and an irreverent cartoon humour. "I can't remember who first suggested Simon, but both John and I were one hundred percent behind him," says Grant now. "Since I first saw his work I was a fan - he brought an energy to comics that was sorely needed at the time. I thought he did a brilliant job, I don't believe there was any other artist who could have pulled it off so successfully."

Grant told Sanderson that "the bond that (Dredd and Batman) form is a bond of intense mutual hatred," and many readers were surprised that the relationship between the pair manifested itself in Dredd's clear physical superiority, with more emphasis placed on Batman's sense of determination. "There was little debate about the dynamic between the characters," says Grant. "Both may be crime fighters, but it was happening in Dredd's city and as a vigilante Batman was, by definition, a perp. This meant that Batman was unlikely to be listened to, because it was Dredd's POV which was more important."

Judgement on Gotham was such a definitive success that it inspired three further Wagner and Grant-written sequels; Vendetta in Gotham (1993, with art by Cam Kennedy), The Ultimate Riddle (1995, by Carl Critchlow and Dermot Power) and Die Laughing (1998, by Glenn Fabry and Jim Murray). The first two books in the series are being released jointly this spring as the first of current 2000AD publisher Rebellion's new 'digest' series, with a smaller size and price, because, says editor Oliver Ball, "they're both fast-paced self-contained stories, making a great 'stand-alone' read as well as a good entry-point for newer readers. We wanted to launch the series with a well-known classic that has been out of print for some time and is often requested by fans."

"No publisher would ever turn down the likelihood of a nice profit, so I understand perfectly why (Fleetway and DC) wanted the sequels," says Grant. "We chose subsequent artists on the strength of how much we liked their work. Bisley set them a massive success to live up to, and I thought they all pulled it off well."

Within this new collection two very different tones stand alongside one another, from Bisley's bold painting to Kennedy's technically brilliant draughtsmanship. "I remember I wasn't keen on the first one, because it had all the faces bursting open and the blood," says the latter artist now. "But boys will be boys, eh? It was a fun job... anything that involved Dredd was fun, and I also got to do the dark Batman I'd always wanted to. They were two counterweights, and it was a great wee idea putting them together."

A Look at the Creator of the WOLF

2016 saw the release of Rachael Ball's critically acclaimed graphic novel The Inflatable Woman. A semi autobiographical story of Rachael's own triumph over cancer it was alternatively tragic, funny, insightful and hugely moving. As is self evident by the books and comics filling our shelves these heady days discovering a new way to tackle a subject isn't easy. Rachael has invested heavily in the WOLF motif in her new book but certainly not in a way that you will expect. Nature is a looming and sinister cloud as it stares back at us with feral eyes through the leaves of a bush or standing proud looks down onto us from atop a vast tree stump. This book works like those frightening fairy tales of our childhood did with strong visuals and a warmth of iconic characters.

WOLF is the story of those frightening moments in childhood and through this we explore the life of a young boy and the relationships he forms. This is done in gothic charcoal styled pencils and inks. Like the etchings in a Victorian newspaper suddenly made flesh in a timeless story book. If you enjoy a look at our own true lives through the shock and awe and sadness and pains of growing as seen in the eyes of a young man you will love this story.

I got to speak to Rachael recently about the new book and she explained that it is a story about loss and grief and the death of a parent. Near to the beginning of this graphic novel a boy is playing in the woods when he sees the titular wolf and Rachael explains that this sight of the creature warns him that something bad is coming. Upon the death of the boy's father he refuses to accept what has happened and instead becomes obsessed with a neighbour who he believes is a wolf man.

She goes on to describe that there is a warning in the book about the oncoming 'something' that is on the horizon and there are lots of references to nature and what what we should be learning from the past as we push forwards in our lives. Running parallel to this are the characters learning to cope with loss and death. Once again we get a little of the autobiographical but she mixes it with her love of the Gothic Fairytale genre and making use of that style in this graphic novel.

The art in WOLF has a similar artistic style to The Inflatable Woman in her own idiosyncratic style. It also makes use of experimental sequences and plays with adding dance and the appearance of music into scenes. Rachael is really inspired by a long interest in dance as an art form since a course at College and can't wait to see what people think. It's kind of a 'Werewolf version of West Side Story'. We may also get a 'Buzby Berkeley sequence with Go-Karts!' He explains. Sadly Rachel and the publishers have put aside the idea to give the book a cover made of fake fur. Turns out it was a little too expensive. 'Maybe for that big oversized collection later on?' I asked. 'Maybe, and one that makes noises' Rachael joked.

Since her days on Deadline Magazine in the nineties Rachael Ball has always produced original and highly affecting stories that never cease to surprise and move the reader. This new venture is getting a launch in the Autumn from Self Made Hero. We were lucky enough to get a peek at some of the upcoming pages that we can share here with you here in Comicscene. I highly recommend anything by this creator and at 296 pages it won't be a short read!

You can find more about it and other books from the Self made Hero stables at www.selfmadehero.com or follow them on Twitter **@SelfMadeHero**

Rachael Ball is a cartoonist and writer artist living in South London. You can read the first chapter of WOLF over at Rachael's blog at **www.rachaelball.tumblr.com** or follow her on Twitter **@rachaelcartoons**

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Stuck in the 18th Century

There were a few things that brought Flintlock together, and these first started to form at a London convention back in early 2015. I'd started Time Bomb Comics in 2007, primarily to get my own work out there which I think is what 99% of us digging away at the small/indie press coalfaces do it for. However over the years I'd started publishing other creators work, all stuff which I thought was great and was delighted to invest in, but I think that meant that everyone had really forgotten that I created comics as well as publishing them – including me.

So I was at this show and writer Jasper Bark took me to task a bit for not writing comics myself anymore. It was a bit of banter, sure, but then I realised that the last thing I'd published with my name on it as a writer was back in 2010 (Dick Turpin and the Crimson Plague) so Jasper kind of had a point. And you should always listen to your old Uncle Jasp.

But what to do?

Well, as I'm an ancient I remember weekly comics of the seventies and eighties. At the time I never read the girls comics of course but they routinely featured strong female characters that the readers could identify with, or at the least enjoy reading about. There's a lack of adventure characters in general these days, realistic female characters even more so. So all these different things started bubbling away in my head – writing comics again, adventure stories, how women are portrayed in comics – all of that led to Flintlock.

Which then allowed me to scratch another personal itch.

I've always enjoyed comics with a historical setting but the 18th Century holds a particular fascination for me. As a setting it's overlooked, not just in comics but in general, which is why you can find lots of stories set in the middle ages or Victorian times but far less in between. It's strange as the era of highwaymen, pirates, thief-takers and all the rest seem a shoe-in for creative inspiration!

As part of the initial concept process I came up with some outlines for some character ideas, at the time it was very much trying to identify one that could sustain a series. Very quickly it looked to me that more than one of these ideas had legs, so suddenly there were a dozen character concepts in front of me. Of course, do I then rush off and announce I'd be releasing twelve first issues over the next year that each had variant covers? No, of course not, for that way lies madness. Instead it was the realisation that I had the bare bones of an anthology book, and developed it from there.

It was then a relatively short leap to the notion of all the stories taking place in a shared timeline, so the different characters are existing in different decades through the Century when we first see them. What became apparent early on as well was the type of characters that were forming – yes, there were the female takes on the traditional highwayman and pirate figures, but there were a half dozen others as well, none of which were the stereotypical comics lead character. That really wasn't intentional but it seemed to be a very interesting USP for Flintlock to have, and since the series launched it's something that people have taken notice of and positively commented about.

I've ended up with 6 characters who are the backbone of the Flintlock timeline and we'll be introducing these characters over Books One through Six. Lady Flintlock, Shanti the Pirate Queen and the Clockwork Cavalier were the first introduced and Onna, Molly and The Trickster Thief arrive in Book Three. The reaction to those first three have been terrific – each one seems to be somebody's favourite – so for me it's going to be interesting to see how thew newcomers are received. In as much the way the Clockwork Cavalier seems to have captured the interest of the Steampunk community the concept behind Molly and The Trickster Thief will hopefully appeal to another specific community, yet still be entertaining to everyone else who enjoys Flintlock.

The major historical events of the century will be happening in the background for the most part; to me it's the impact of these events in the wider world that's rich for exploration. There's a few things that are perhaps lesser known generally – the earthquake that flattened Lisbon in 1755, or the Battle of Karnal in 1739 where the Indian city of Delhi was ransacked – that offer more interesting story ideas I think.

I think it's the same with known historical figures – they'll be few and far between and only introduced in the right context. I mean it makes sense for John and Henry Fielding to pop up in connection with the Clockwork Cavalier as they were in charge of the Bow Street Runners, but it doesn't make sense for Shanti to encounter Blackbeard or Lady Flintlock to meet King George II because that just seems a bit silly.

Some characters will encounter one another in some form (although I can say with some certainty that they won't be all coming together and forming some kind of 18th Century superteam - that way also lies madness) but there will be butterfly effects through the timeline. The actions of one character in, say, 1720 can impact on another in 1796 – that kind of thing.

Beyond that? Well, I have a hundred years and a whole planet to play with – that's almost limitless potential I think! I'd love to carry it forward, but it's really down to if there is a viable and sustainable readership out there for this stuff. I've been heartened by the reaction to Flintlock so far, and that it's also independently being developed as a tabletop roleplaying game is hugely exciting I think, but the law of diminishing returns is a cruel one, and it's how Book Five and Six are received that will really determine Flintlock's fate.

Whatever happens, I have this assortment of characters now that I feel are pretty unique, and I know that whatever happens to the core Flintlock title in the future I'll be returning to those characters in some fashion in the years to come, although perhaps in some unexpected ways!

In the August issue of ComicScene UK we look at female comic creators and characters. Don't miss Comic Scene Issue 1 - our first monthly issue.

Author: Steve Tanner
Twitter: @stevetanneruk
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UNICORN
The first Colour Cover on a U.K. Comics Fanzine

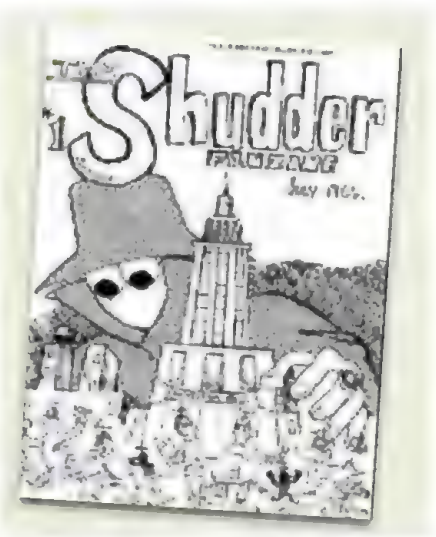
UNICORN #5
Front Cover by Mike Higgs, 1972

After having created three issues of the very first U.K. based general fanzine; KA-POW, co-editors Steve Moore and Phil Clarke went their separate ways. They remained close friends, but each branched out into producing their own fanzines; Steve went on to publish Aspect and Orpheus, and Phil to publish Unicorn, with Mike Higgs.

Phil Clarke became heavily involved in dealing comics (eventually opening Nostalgia & Comics in Birmingham in 1977), and Unicorn began life as a free sales / Trade / News adzine, distributed to anyone asking to be added to the mailing list. At first, the zine just carried Phil's own lists, but later accepted 'want' lists, and adverts for other fanzines and fannish events. Most of the issue was Electrostencil printed, though the covers by Mike Higgs were all offset litho.

Mike Higgs had been contributing covers and interior illustrations to SF zines since the early 1960s. This included his own zine, Shudder which although SF in nature, also included a strip and an article on American comics. Shudder was of course a pastiche of The Shadow, which in turn became The Cloak, when the character was published in Odham Press's POW! Comic.

THE SHUDDER FANZINE #1
Front Cover by Mike Higgs, 1964



With issue 2, and the print run rising to 250, Mike and Phil expanded the editorial content to include a few comics strips; Bent Feather by Jan Sitek, Kraggor by KA-POW stalwarts Steve Moore and Ken Simpson, and The Barbarian by Steve Moore and Mike Higgs. The zine also reprinted some Batman newspaper strips from 1943.

Issue 3 has so far eluded my grasp, but thanks to Comic dealer and historian Ewan Brownlow, I do have a copy of the cover by Higgs; which features a lovely image of Rupert the Bear riding a Unicorn.

UNICORN Covers 1-4
Mike Higgs (& various) 1970-1972

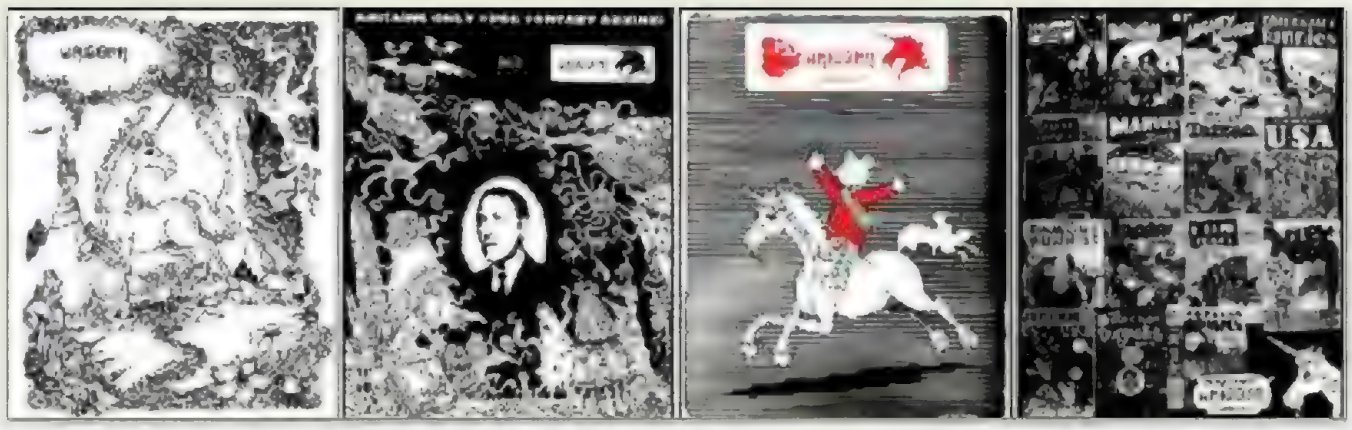
By issue 4, the sales lists had been hived off from the main zine and were still available for free on request. Unicorn itself now cost 25p an issue, but could also be obtained freely for a contribution for the zine, a letter of comment, or as a zine swap.

Both the Kraggor and The Barbarian strips concluded with this issue.

After a break of nine months between issues 4 and 5, Unicorn returned, and really started to hit its stride, but as so often was the case in those days, it did so with what turned out to be its final issue.

In their editorial for this issue, Mike and Phil review the first four, and state their intent for future issues, which would feature "...comic strips, experimental, traditional and reprints in any field that will interest you and us. Articles will be about fantasy, comics, cartoonists, comic premiums, pulps and anything in the related field that you care to write about..."

Most fanzines tended to come to an end either due to the editors moving on to 'bigger and better' things, or to a general lack of contributors from the readers. Editorials decrying apathy during this period are legion, and all through its

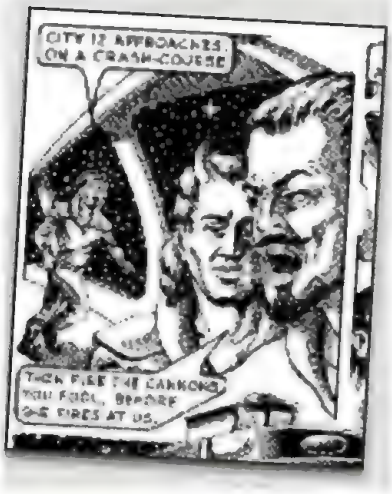


run, Mike and Phil express a certain amount of despair at the lack of involvement from people in fandom, and issue specific pleas for contributions to the zine.

Having said that, this issue does have some reader involvement in the form of a letter column; including missives from such fan luminaries as Mike Cruden and Alan Hunter (who also supplies five, two page episodes of his wonderful Alon Alone strip).

Alan Hunter really is one of the superstars of fandom, who furnished both SF and Comics fandom with a seemingly never ending supply of instantly recognisable, high quality artwork.

The cover image of issue 3 that Ewan has kindly supplied me with was taken from the copy once belonging to Alan, who kept his zines in lovely condition. I'd love to own a copy of this, and if anyone fancies selling theirs, or even just scanning it for my fanzine archive, then please do get in touch with me.



UNICORN #5
ALON ALONE
strip by Alan Hunter

Other original strips in issue 5 include Tarzipan, written and illustrated by Jan Sitek, and Mouse by Mike Higgs.

Art wise we're also treated to a very early Jack Kirby / Captain America / Bucky Barnes illustration by Kevin O'Neill.

The reprinted strips also included in this issue are Zor the Mighty by E G. Letkeman from the 1940s, Captain Marvel and The Friendly Horrors from Whiz Comics, and Wally Wood's ever-so-slightly risqué Far-Out Fables.

The articles come in the form of Rod Jackson talking about the British Edgar Rice Burroughs Editions, a look at 50's Space Heroes by Andrew Dorlington, and Marvel vs National by future Comic Media News editor, Richard Burton.

All in all, this is a lovely, if all too short, run of fanzines, but one which punches far above its weight in fanzine history, by dint of the full colour, hand separated colour cover; the first on any U.K. Comics Zine.

Next issue, I'll take a look at some of the other (perhaps less than successful) attempts at introducing colour onto fanzine covers, over the years, and at a few of the other professional comic artists who produced fanzine covers in the early years.

UNICORN #5
Illustration by Kevin O'Neill 1972

Afterword

Mike & Phil have worked together on other comic related projects since of course the days of Unicorn of course. These later, more professionally produced publications, show a direct link back to those early interests displayed in the fanzine nearly 40 years earlier.

NOSTALGIA ABOUT COMICS by Phil Clarke & Mike Higgs. Assisted by Sue Williams 1991. A collection of comic strips and covers from the 1940s onwards, reprinted from Phil's own collection.

GREAT BRITISH FANTASY COMIC BOOK HEROES by Phil Clarke & Mike Higgs 2009. A larger Archive Collection of original strips from the Pages of Britain's "independent" Comic Books of the 1940's and 1950's, containing 464 black and white pages of originated British hero strips. A limited edition of 100, priced at £75.00.

You can read 4 of these issues of Unicorn (as well as other fanzines mentioned in this article, and many others) at my Archive site, which can be found at:
https://davidprice5.wixsite.com/classicukcomicszines

Phil Clarke & Mike Higgs taken at the British International Comics Show 2010
© Copyright Richard Bruton

Author: David Hathaway Price
Twitter: @David_HPrice
Website: https://davidprice5.wixsite.com/classicukcomicszines

FITCH BAKER COLLINS

APOLLO

With 2019 marking the fiftieth anniversary of the Apollo landing, it will unbelievably be half a century since Neil Armstrong, Buzz Aldrin and Michael Collins first stepped on the moon. Now Selfmadehero are set to commemorate that auspicious anniversary almost twelve months early with the publication of Apollo, a graphic novel by writers Matt Finch and Chris Baker and artist Mike Collins.

Having previously co-founded micro-publisher Dead Canary Comics and teamed up with Hookjaw artist Conor Boyle on their 2016 debut graphic novel Reddin, Finch and Baker hadn't expected Collins to accept their offer when they approached him at the 2015 London Supercon. "We had this huge 150-page script that we knew we couldn't possibly produce ourselves so we reached out to Mike on a wing and a prayer," recalls Finch. "We liked his art style and thought it would be great for Apollo, but we didn't really think he'd give us the time of day. Then about three hours after sending the email into the digital abyss, Mike responded telling us that he loved it and he is actually a space fanatic, so it's a subject that's close to his heart."

"Once Mike was on board, we managed to cajole Emma Hayley into reading the script and before long we had a deal," adds Baker, referring to Selfmadehero's publishing director. "You could say that it was a match made in the stars."

An in-demand artist whose art has graced everything from 2000 AD stalwarts Judge Dredd and Slaine to Spider-Man and Doctor Who over the past three decades, Collins was fortuitously able to fit it into his usually hectic schedule. "When they told me what it was about, my interest was piqued," he admits. "They then sent me the script and I was hooked. Some of the pages in the book are actually a couple of years old as I was doing promo pages way ahead of us getting the project underway. I've been pleased and impressed that we've kept our enthusiasm going through this long period!"

Author: Stephen Jewell
Twitter: @stephenjewell
Stephen writes for SFX, Total Film & the Megazine before the 50th anniversary of the Apollo landings

As a child of the '80s, Finch grew up during the era of the Space Shuttle, and inherited his interest in the exploits of the early astronauts from his father. "My Dad was a huge fan and armchair scholar of the space race, so he instilled that in me," he recalls. "A lot of the early research for Apollo was from books borrowed from him."

"I was always fascinated by the moon landing but mainly because I was one of those fools who had doubts we ever actually made the trip!" laughs Baker. "It wasn't until I sat down with an endless spread of evidence in front of me that I felt fully schooled."

In contrast, Collins was born the very same day - May 5th, 1961 - that Alan Shepard auspiciously became the first American to travel into space. He also shares his name with Apollo 11 astronaut Michael Collins, who remained behind in orbit while his now more famous colleagues, Neil Armstrong and Buzz Aldrin, took the lunar capsule down to the surface of the moon. "Watching the launch of Apollo 11 in primary school and hearing my name was one of those moments you never forget," he says. "Funnily enough, when I made a crack to Chris and Matt about me being the inevitable artist for the book, they said that it had ever occurred to them!"

Contrasting scenes of Apollo 11's landmark voyage with flashbacks that gradually build up to the big day, Finch and Baker place those momentous events within a wider historical context, which also incorporate other famous figures including Presidents Kennedy and Nixon. "Our original intention was to tell the story of the three guys in the spaceship with flashbacks to the events that got them there," explains Finch. "We wanted to make it very simple, and very factual. But as we went further and further down the writing rabbit hole, we realised that this wasn't just a story about three guys, it was a story about a whole country - America."

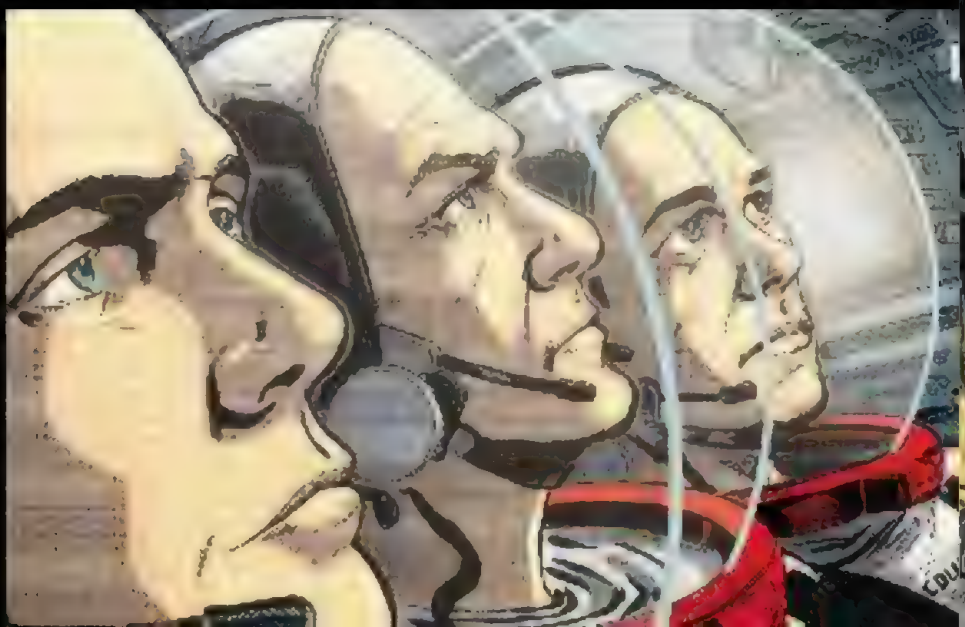
But while they don't sensationally reveal that the moon is actually made of green cheese, there are also plenty of intriguing cultural references including nods to David Bowie's classic song, 'A Space Oddity,' and most bizarrely Marvel's Ego the Living Planet. "'Space Oddity' came out the same month as the landing, and there's also a nod to Stanley Kubrick's film, 2001: A Space Odyssey, which was also released in 1969," says Baker. "Although I must admit that my only experience of Ego is from Guardians of the Galaxy 2!"

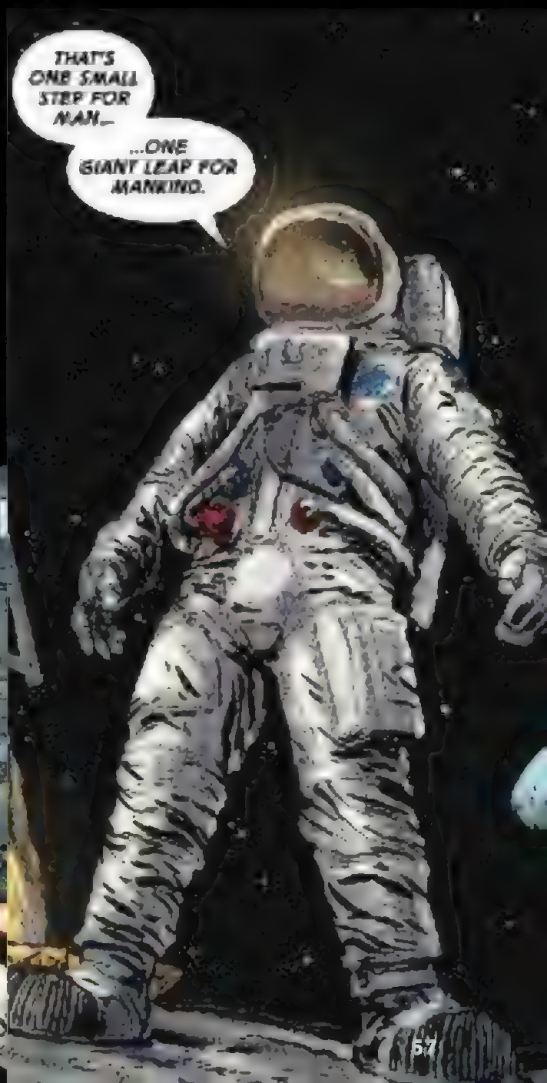
"Chris and Matt were going for Georges Melies in the script," continues Collins, referring to the director of the 1902 French film, A Trip to the Moon. "So making it Ego was mostly down to me and my love of Jack Kirby."

Having not only illustrated numerous Doctor Who comics including 2010 graphic novel The Only Good Dalek but also recently worked as a storyboarder for the BBC television series, Collins has plenty of experience drawing fictional tales of time and space. However, he insists that there is "surprisingly little" difference when it comes to more factual-based stories like Apollo. "One of my rules of thumb with doing fantastical strips is that they should always feel real," he reasons. "So alien cities should have a starting point in reality, and I have a library of books of things like '50s motels, modern Japanese architecture and conceptual buildings, so that I'm not just creating stuff on the fly."

While he has done "a whole stack of research," Collins has also tried not to be too slavish when it came to capturing the specific likenesses of the main characters. "I've tried to keep the Columbia crew as consistent as possible, but that involved creating my own version of them otherwise every shot would just be a traced photograph and that doesn't work for lively storytelling," says Collins, who acknowledges the important contributions of letterer Ian Sharman and colourists Kris Carter and Jason Cardy. "We've known each other for years and have worked on several projects together, so we make up a kind of loose virtual studio."

"Without doing a disservice to Mike's work, it's when the pages were coloured that they really came to life," adds Finch. "Some of the decisions we made with Ian during the lettering stage had major effects on the storytelling. Comics is a collaborative medium, and Apollo was a real team effort."

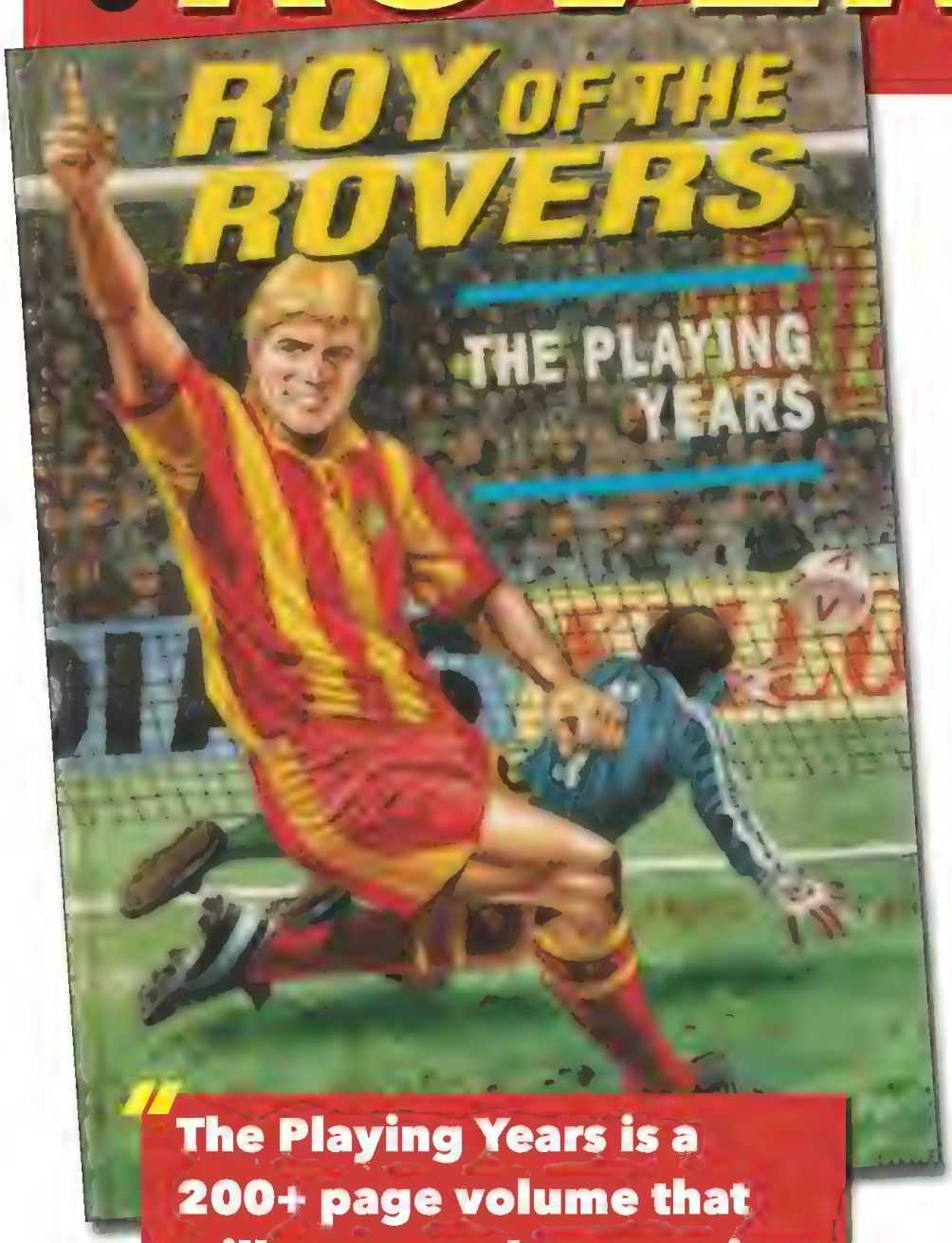




Collecting

ROY OF THE ROVERS

by Richard Sheaf



"The Playing Years is a 200+ page volume that still commands a premium amongst collectors"

Roy of the Rovers first appeared in Tiger comic way back in 1954 and is due to be "re-launched" by Rebellion publishing later this year with brand new material. So this feels like a great time to look at what material is out there relating to 'classic' Roy that you could be collecting. Roy graced the cover of the inaugural Tiger annual (for 1957) but after that he only appeared on the covers for the 1974 and 1977 annuals, but that's because he'd been given his own annual from 1958 – this ran continuously until 1994 (and was briefly revived in 2000) with Roy on most of the annual covers. However, I want to look at the more obscure books that were produced... so in date order we have...

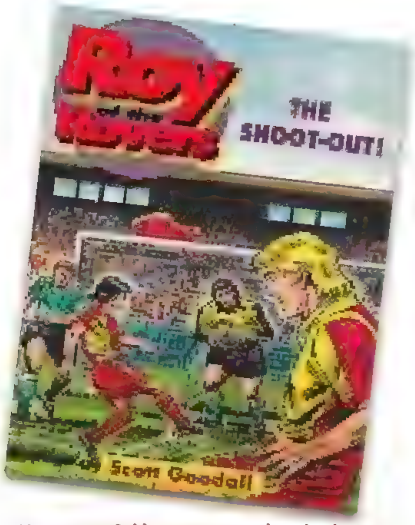
1). Roy of the Rovers – The novel

In 1977 New English Library brought out a 4 issue 'series' of comic novelisations – an eclectic selection, the series featured Dan Dare, D-Day Dawson, No tears for Molly and Roy of the Rovers. These slim volumes (they were all 128 pages long) cost the princely sum of 60 pence and in this case featured the story of how Rovers quest to win the European Cup Winner's Cup gets off to a shaky start when 2 of the Melchester players are injured in a charity friendly played on motorbikes. Really. The book features great Joe 'Charley's War' Colquhoun illustrations throughout.

2). Roy of the Rovers football quiz book (undated, 1978) & Roy of the Rovers football quizbook 1979-80

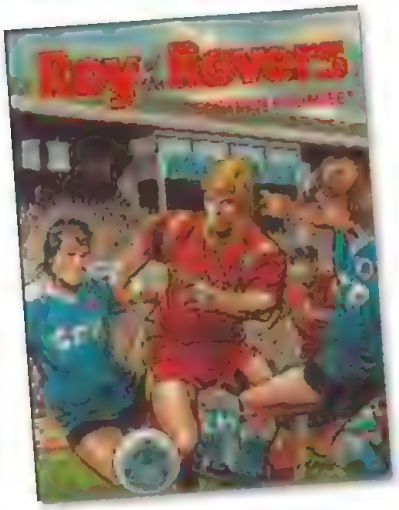
In his book Comic book Hero Barrie Tomlinson confesses that this book (and it's 1979-80 successor) didn't have the biggest budget in history (and that shows!) but that they looked ok, and in both cases Barrie's skills were able to procure a couple of famous names to pen the introductions. Material from

Tiger and Roy of the Rovers is reprinted throughout the books. A couple of small paperbacks to gladden the heart of any Roy fan.



3). Roy of the Rovers short story collections – Come on, you reds! & The shoot-out!

Tom Tully and (Marcus) Scott Goodall were two extremely prolific scriptwriters and it's perhaps not a surprise to see their talents put to good use in these 2 short story collections. Each volume contains ten stories and for £1.99 you get to "...follow the ups and downs of Roy's red and yellow army, who make up the finest team in European football history. Stars such as 'Rapper' Hardisty, 'Hard Man' Dexter, the Bresden Bull and Rocky junior combine to make exciting reading – and the heart-stopping football characterised by Racey's Rocket".



4). Roy of the Rovers – Eastern Promise & Melchester Magic

In the early 1990s Ravette Books published a series of reprint volumes featuring a selection of material from titles such as Thunderbirds (6 volumes), Stingray (2 volumes), Captain Scarlet (2 volumes), Sonic the comic (4 volumes) and, of course, Roy.

Eastern Promise is a single story which feature an East-West clash of cultures as a 4-way tournament between England (represented by Melchester Rovers), the USA, Japan and Korea, they all come together for a world youth cup (as Japan have just failed to qualify for Italia 90). Robot strikers (!), dodgy pitches, spies and some rather mature looking 'youth' players are not enough to stop the Melchester next generation from eventually lifting the trophy. Melchester Magic, on the other hand, is a selection of 6 stories and gives a selection of artists (good and bad!) from amongst the many to have illustrated Roy's adventures.

5). Roy of the Rovers – The playing years

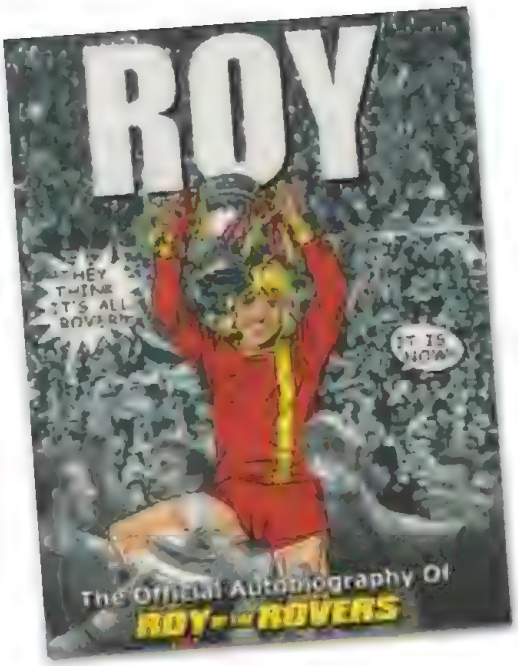
This large hardback volume published in 1994 is a 200+ page volume that, due to its high quality contents still commands a premium amongst collectors. The format of the book is a season-by-season review of Roy's exploits. You get a one page recap of the season with details of how Rovers had performed in the key matches that had defined the season (i.e. had featured in the pages of the comic).

So, not only is it a great work of reference (if you want to know how Rovers got on in every cup competition from the '50s to the '90s this is definitely the book for you), but you also get a few pages of art for each of those years.

6). Roy – The (auto)biographical years

With no new Roy material being published, publishers Aurum turned instead to the burgeoning nostalgia market for the next volume associated with Roy. Journalist Mick Collins is drafted in to talk to the editors, illustrators and creatives who brought Roy to life. The blurb promises to reveal how Roy's life was influenced by both the looks of Cliff Richard and the assassination of JR Ewing – and how did Sir Alf Ramsey come to manage Melchester Rovers? All these questions and more are answered inside this book which neatly combines a chronological history of Roys's exploits with behind the scenes chat. A good combination all in all.

That's more than can be said, sadly, for Roy's official autobiography. Ghosted by Eddie Grant this is Roy's autobiography 'told' by the great man himself. I found



this to be quite a dull, self-indulgent read with little to recommend it. But what do I know, eh? The reviews that found their way onto the paperback version are, unsurprisingly, slightly more positive. A mixed bag then.

This is the cover for the hardback version of Roy's autobiography. The eulogies on the back page are from some high profile writers making big claims (Nick Hornby says "...something that PG Wodehouse would have been happy to put his name to", Robert Harris "...a masterpiece of comic writing in the tradition of Molesworth, Diary of a nobody and 1066 and all that") that don't chime at all with my memory of this book. Interestingly this version of the book is credited as "...with Giles Smith" whereas in the hardback version credit goes to Eddie Grant.

So there you have it people an introduction to the world of Roy of the Rovers volumes that should be sitting on your shelves right now.

Author: Richard Sheaf
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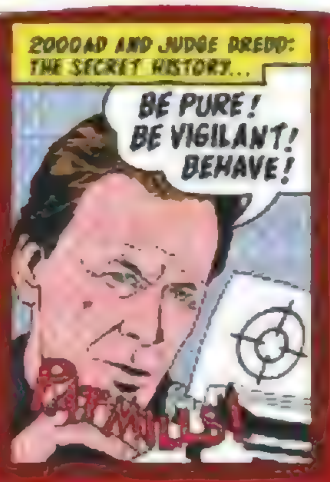

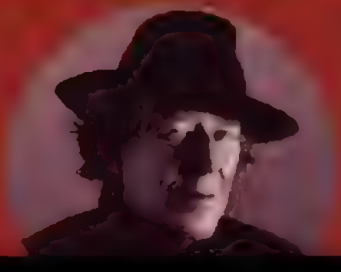

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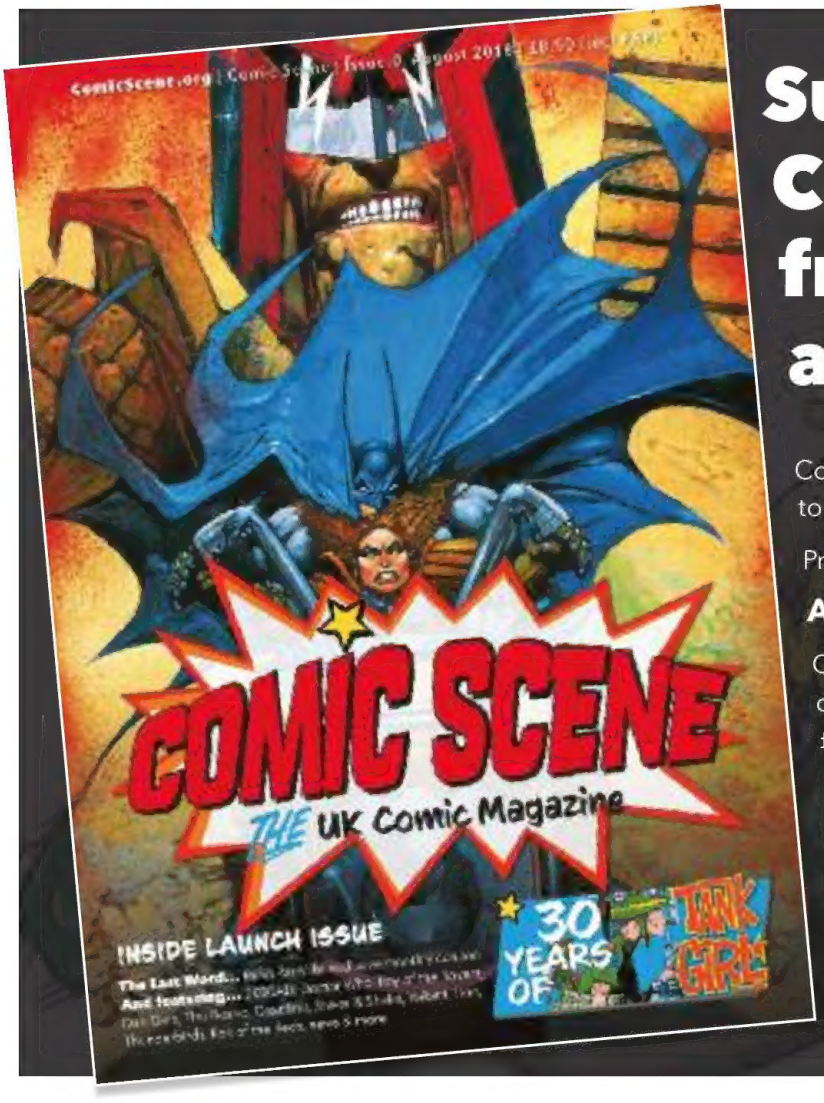

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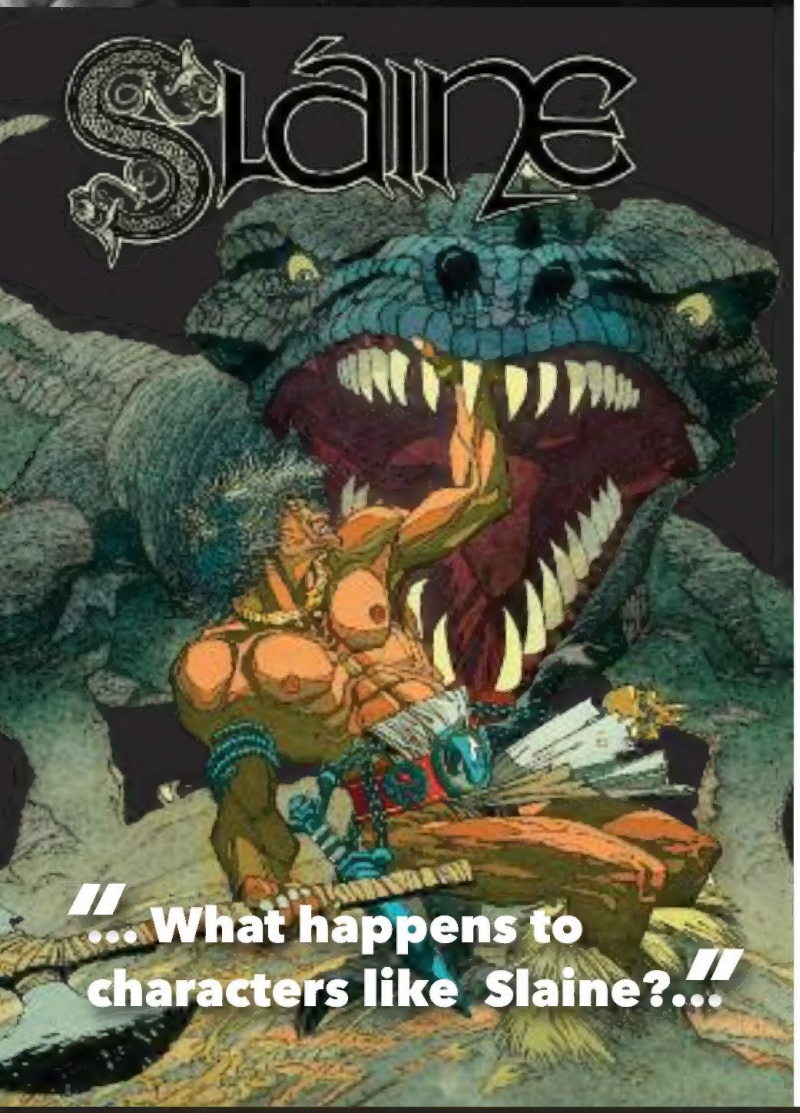
The Last Word

with Pat Mills



SHOULD COMIC CHARACTERS DIE WITH THEIR CREATORS?

When I brought back Frank Hampson's Dan Dare in 2000AD it turned out to be the right decision commercially. The story, whatever its faults, was very popular with readers. But I realised later that, ethically, I was wrong. This is a subject I pursue in my novel Goodnight, John-Boy, where my three central editorial characters – basically three shards of my own personality - argue bitterly about bringing back a similar series: Dan Darwin and the Voyage of the Spaceship Beagle. SF purist Joy says it's morally wrong to revive Dan, but Dave and Greg are tempted by its huge potential appeal that could make all the difference to their new 1977 comic Space Warp.

So this opens up the subject of whether comic characters like Dan Dare should end when their creators part company with them. It obviously doesn't apply to 'house characters', like the Judge Dredd universe with its myriad writers and artists where I assume everyone is happy enough with the current arrangements. But what happens to non-house characters like Slaine, ABC Warriors and more when we creators re-tire/move on to new projects/ fall under a bus/go ga ga? This must be on fans' minds and perhaps editors, too.

In France, it's simple enough. Creators will sometimes hand on the reins to their approved successors, knowing that on every subsequent story, written and drawn by a new creative team, they will receive a fair percentage in royalties. There's also the example of Asterix. Artist-creator and latter-day writer Uderzo recently sold the rights to publishers Hachette who commissioned a new writer and artist to produce new Asterix books with eye watering sales figures.

Asterix, of course, is in a stratospheric league of its own. But our British industry shows no sign of paying the creators when others take over their characters. Instead, they seem happy enough to let the stories die. Hence Halo Jones ended when Alan Moore stopped writing it. Indeed, it would be a foolhardy writer and artist who would attempt to continue Halo Jones without Alan and artist Ian Gibson. Slaine, ABC Warriors and Ro-Busters have equally distinctive creative signatures, so it's reasonable to assume they, too, will be allowed to end when I stop writing them.

Not least because fans know just how strongly we feel about our creations. It's no longer a legal issue of who signed away their rights to a publisher; it's now widely seen as a moral issue. It's clearly immoral not to remunerate a creator for his story in whatever subsequent form it takes. End of.

So today it would be a very bullish editor who would commission some hungry hack to cross that fan picket line and revive the ABC Warriors or Slaine. And today's older, more sophisticated audience won't readily accept 'reimagined', 'homage', 'reboot' , 'special anniversary tribute', spin-off series or any other questionable excuses for getting around a creator's express wishes that their story died with them. I think that goes for American fans, too, where whatever extra bucks DC picked up from Watchmen 'spin-offs' by other writers and artists it must have been negated by their loss of street cred.

Of course it's sad when a character you love dies. And there are, albeit rarely, writers who can successfully reboot the original. Frank Miller on Dark Knight and Alan Moore on Swamp Thing. But, for the most part, it's best to leave well alone. Putting films to one side, (a whole other ball game), Conan after Howard, Bond after Fleming and Sherlock Holmes after Doyle don't really cut it. The same applies equally to comics. Rogue Trooper and VCs after Finley-Day are just not in the same league. Or imagine Faceache written and drawn by anyone other than Ken Reid? Ken also created the even darker Frankie Stein cartoon strip. I was the main writer on Frankie, when it was subsequently drawn by Bob Nixon, and I actually volunteered to sack myself so Ken could get his character back. This was because his original, rarely-seen Frankie Stein (probably owned by Times Warner now) surpasses Monty Python for insane black comedy and we could not come close to it. My editor said no. Maverick Ken 'needed controlling, needed watching', he told me. The fact it was Ken's creation mattered zilch. This inspired the account in my Serial Killer of the sad story of cartoonist Ken Royce. As in Rolls Royce.

There are other examples where new writers and artists taking over a strip is a mistake. Three years ago, I certainly didn't like the sound of a proposed Slaine-light for the Phoenix aimed at Waitrose readers and, thankfully, neither did they in the end. Ditto when IDW were thinking about ABC Warriors as a back-up strip with no reference to the writer or artists involved. I like to think that didn't fly because Rebellion didn't think it was worth compromising the integrity of the characters just to make a few bucks.

And when writers have taken over my stories, it's always been a disaster. Thus there was a follow up to my Visible Man which Scott Goodall wrote. Rejected by Tharg. There was a follow up to my Flesh scripted by Dennis Hooper. Rejected by Tharg. There was Charley's War in WW2 by Scott Goodall. It stiffed at the box office in record time and killed the entire series. Although I think I was outfoxed there. I believe my managing editor, Gil Page, who was not stupid, guessed it wouldn't be a success, but wanted an excuse to kill the series (this was his second attempt), either to cut me down to size and/or because he disliked its anti-authority message and had his own serpentine way of dealing with it. Editors and publishers sometimes think like that.

But this is why, unless there's an unlikely seismic shift whereby creators are properly remunerated for their work, it is far better that our characters die with us. So readers remember them not with acrimony or disappointment, but with affection. Like the beautiful new edition of Charley's War just out from Rebellion which I'm delighted to say has a white poppy of peace on the front cover.

Don't assume my perspective is a lone one. As I describe in my Secret History of 2000AD and Judge Dredd, 'Be Pure...' my predecessors were actually more militant than any of us. Each generation that followed them has become noticeably and increasingly subservient on the issue of rights. Few creators go public with their criticisms as I have. They often agree in private but decline to be quoted. But, back in the day, Don Lawrence of Trigan Empire fame left to work for Holland where he got a fairer deal. Leo Baxendale, creator of so many fantastic Beano characters, took on the might of D. C. Thomson in open court battle and won. And Frank Hampson had more courage than any of us who followed him. Let me leave you with his fighting words.

When presented by a publisher with a Mekon statue for his Dan Dare he told him, 'I swore I'd get this Mekon by hook or by crook. And I got it. From a crook.'

Shining examples to us all.

#tlw

Goodnight, John-Boy
Read 'em and Weep
A novel by Pat Mills

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